

No. 1 of 3

Tex Avery's

DROOPY



PLUS SCREWBALL
SQUIRREL



OCT

\$2.50

\$3.50 CANADA

starring in
"DR. DROOPENSTEIN"



Tex Avery's

DROOPY™

starring in

"DR. DROOPENSTEIN"

Script & Pencils by **Brian Lemay**

Inks by **Greg Hyland**

Letters by **Dave Lanphear**

Colors by **David Nestelle**

PLUS

Tex Avery's

SCREWBALL SQUIRREL™

in

"THE VIOLENT ZONE"

Script & Letters by **Bob Fingerman** Pencils by **Greg Hyland** Inks by **Scott Shaw** Colors by **Cary Porter**

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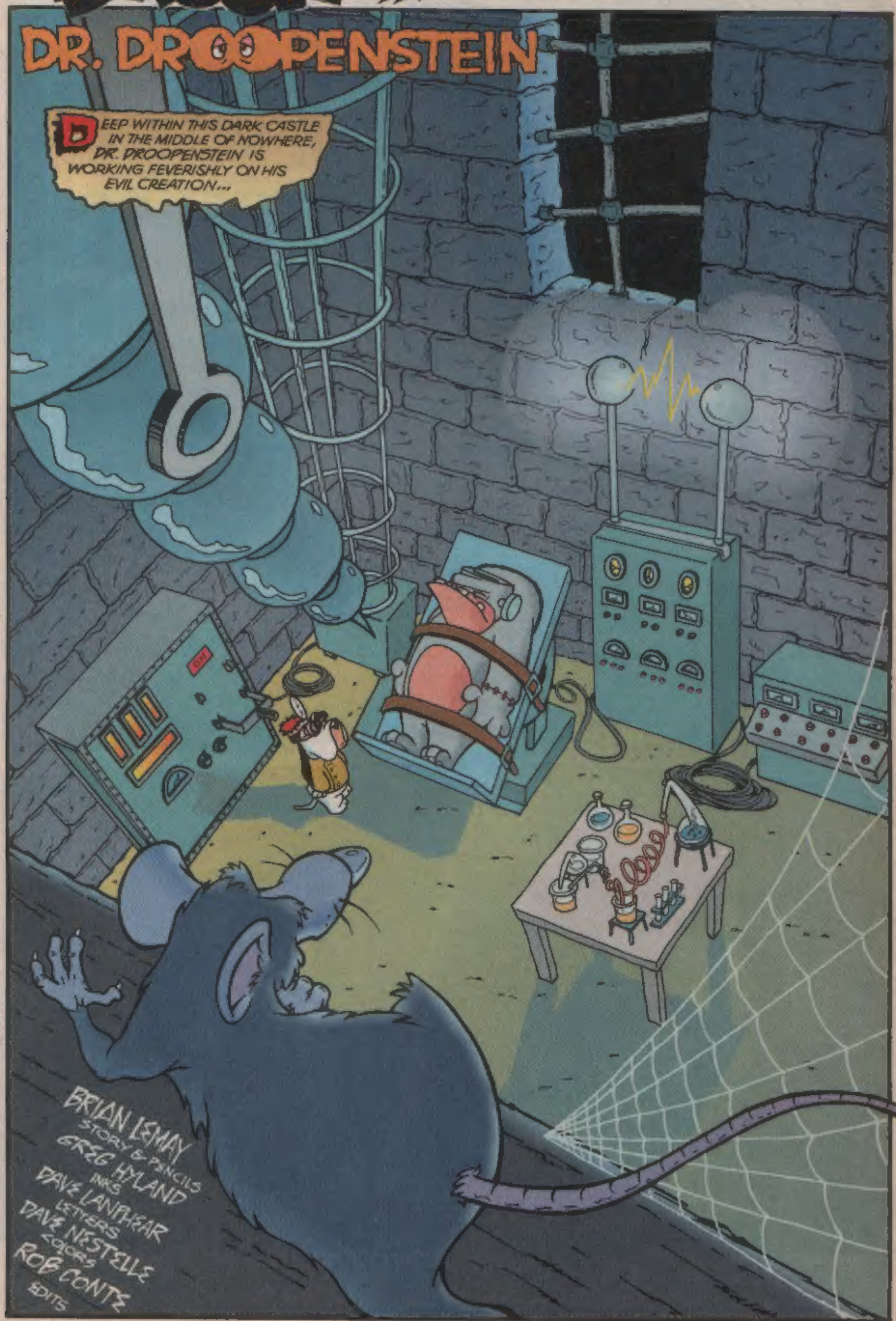
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DROOPY™ IN

DR. DROOPENSTEIN

DEEP WITHIN THIS DARK CASTLE
IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE,
DR. DROOPENSTEIN IS
WORKING FEVERISHLY ON HIS
EVIL CREATION...



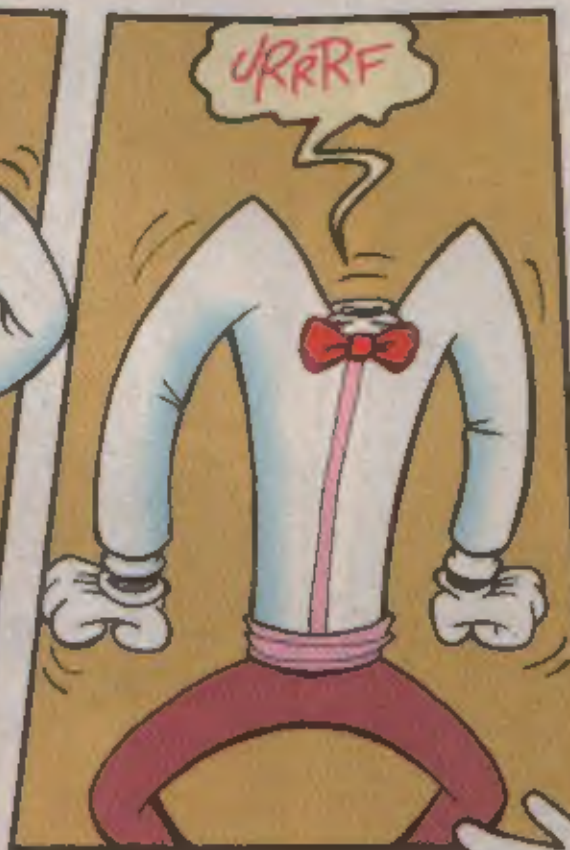
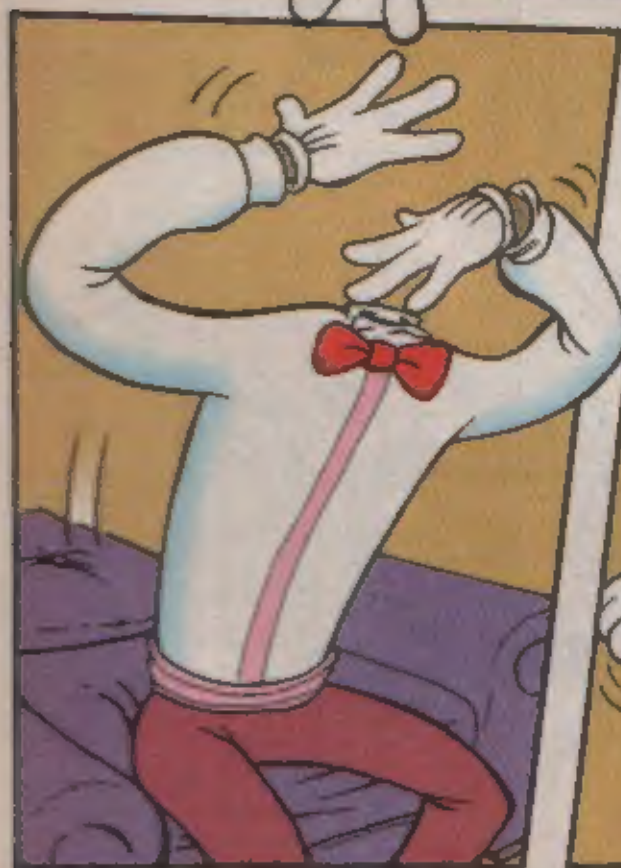
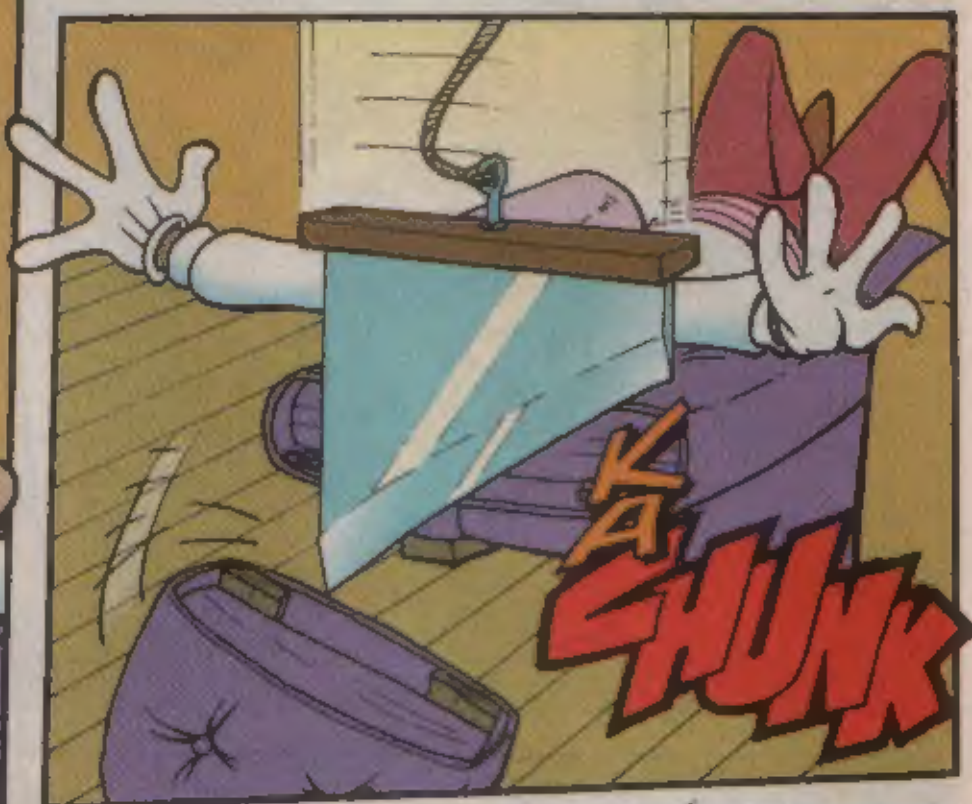
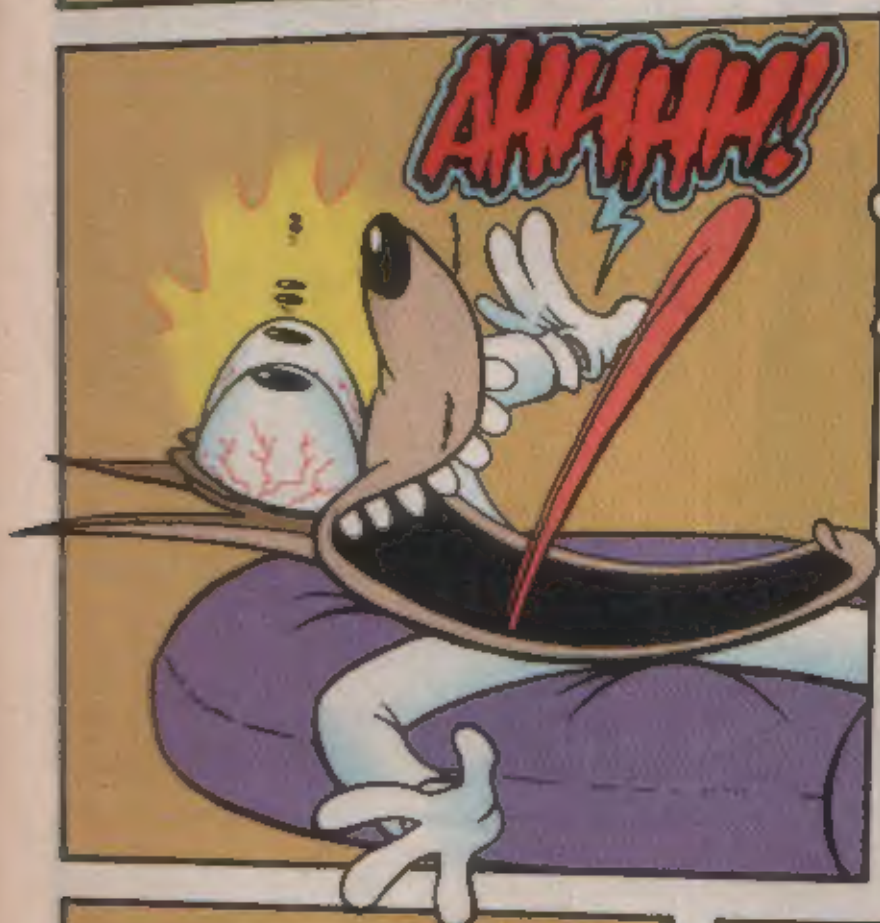
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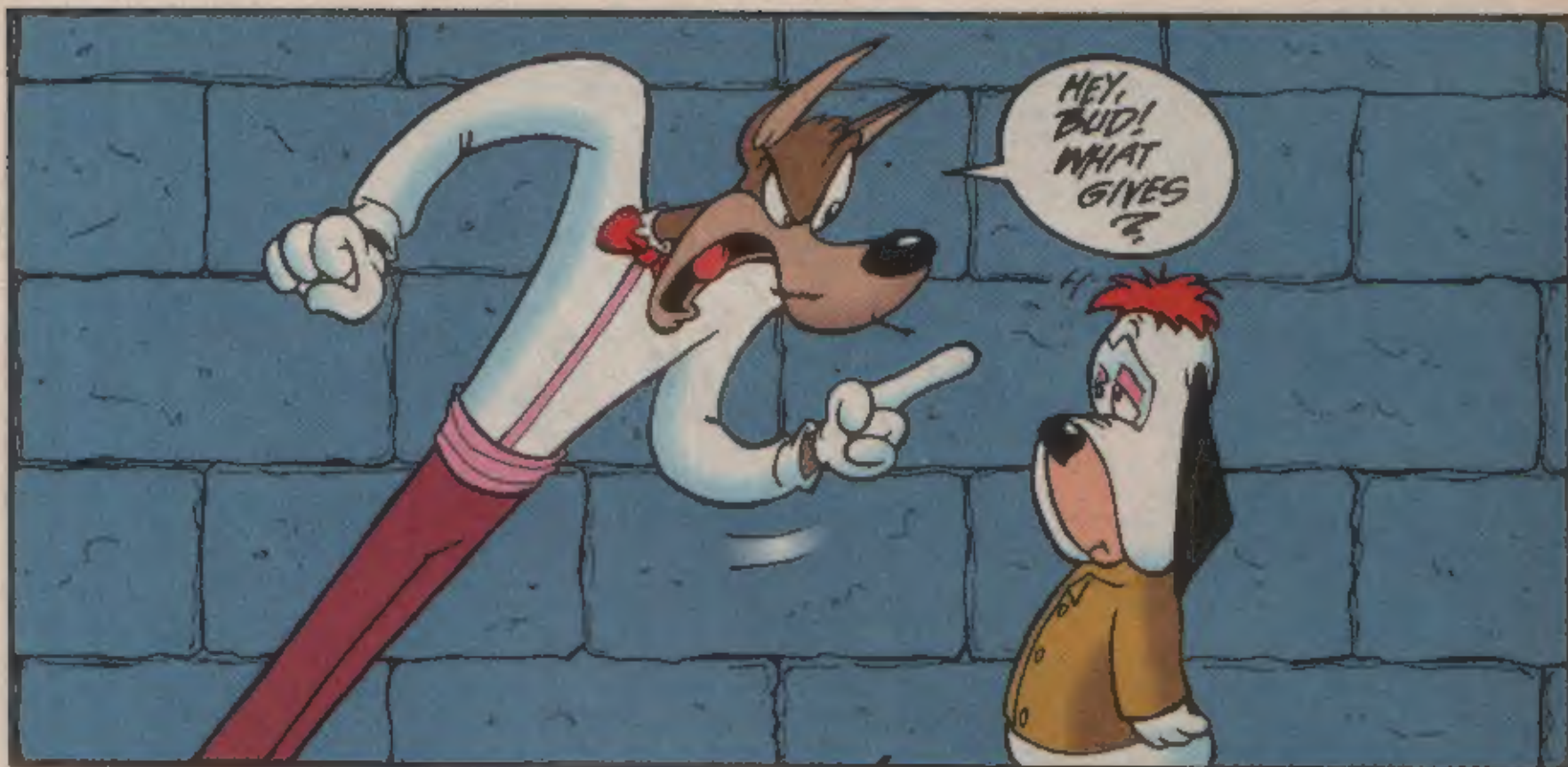


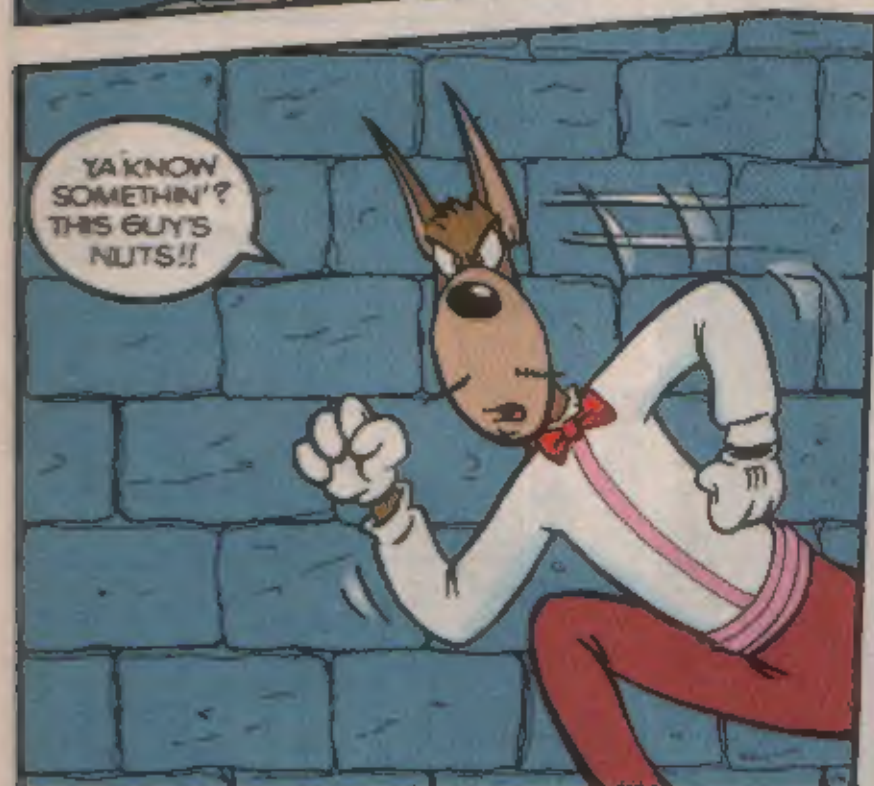


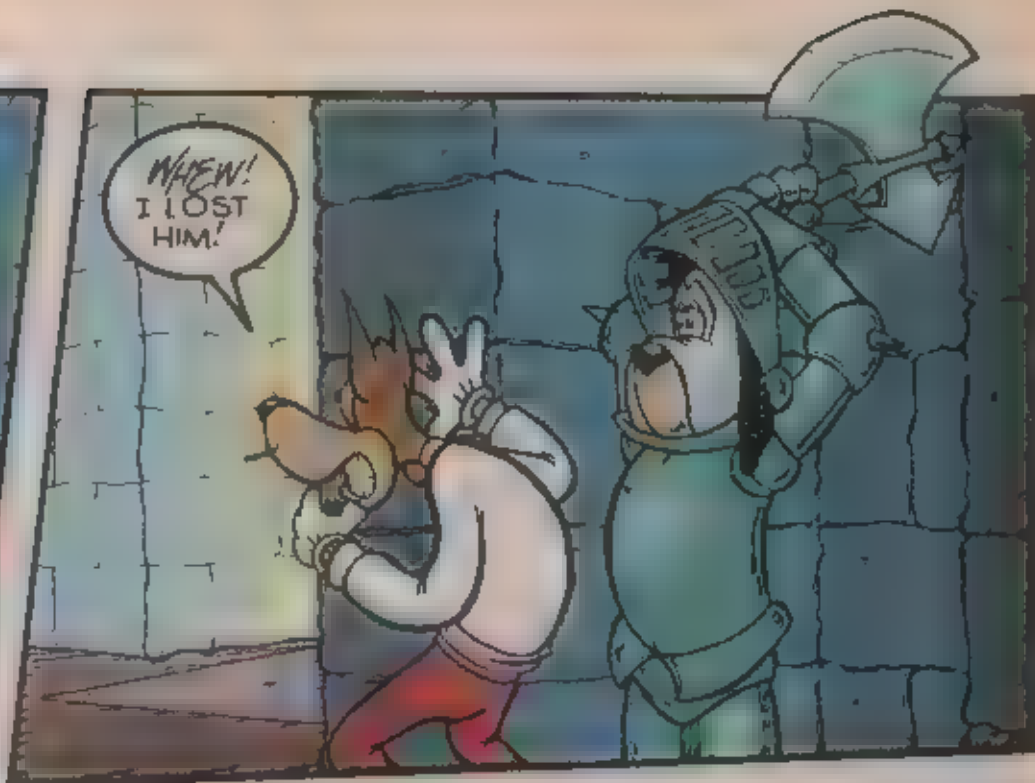
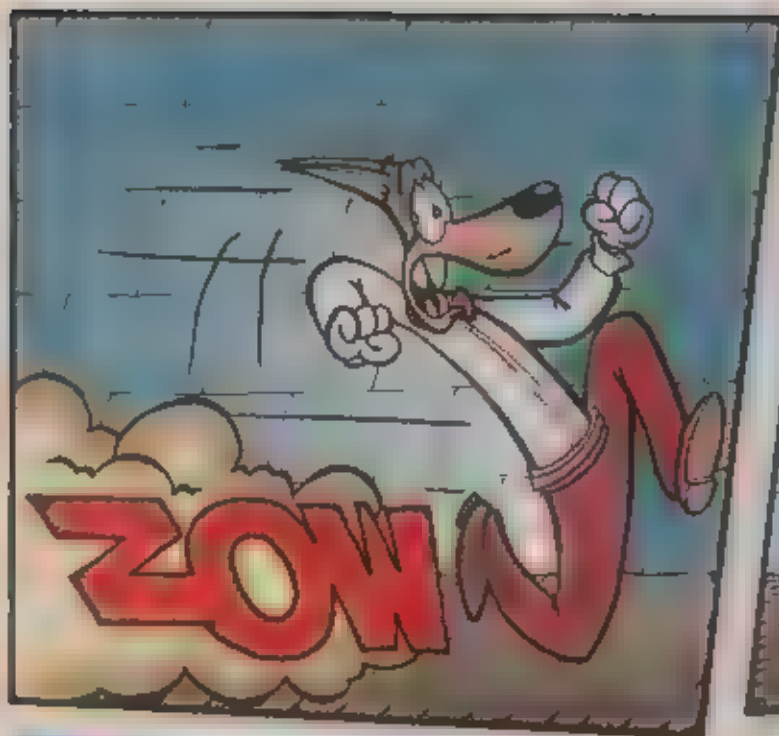


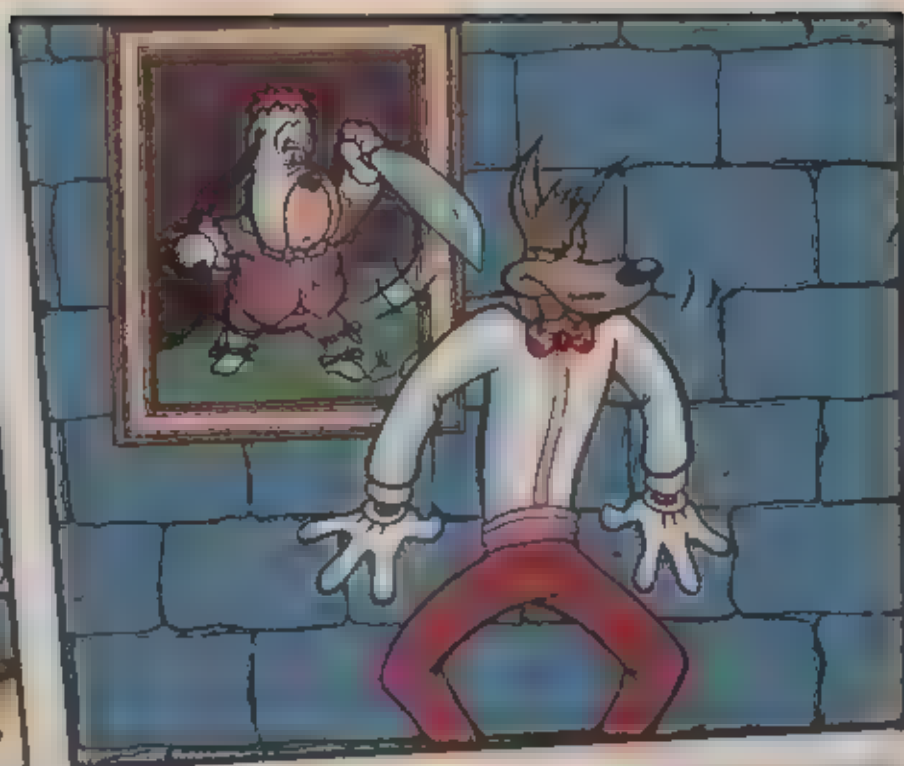


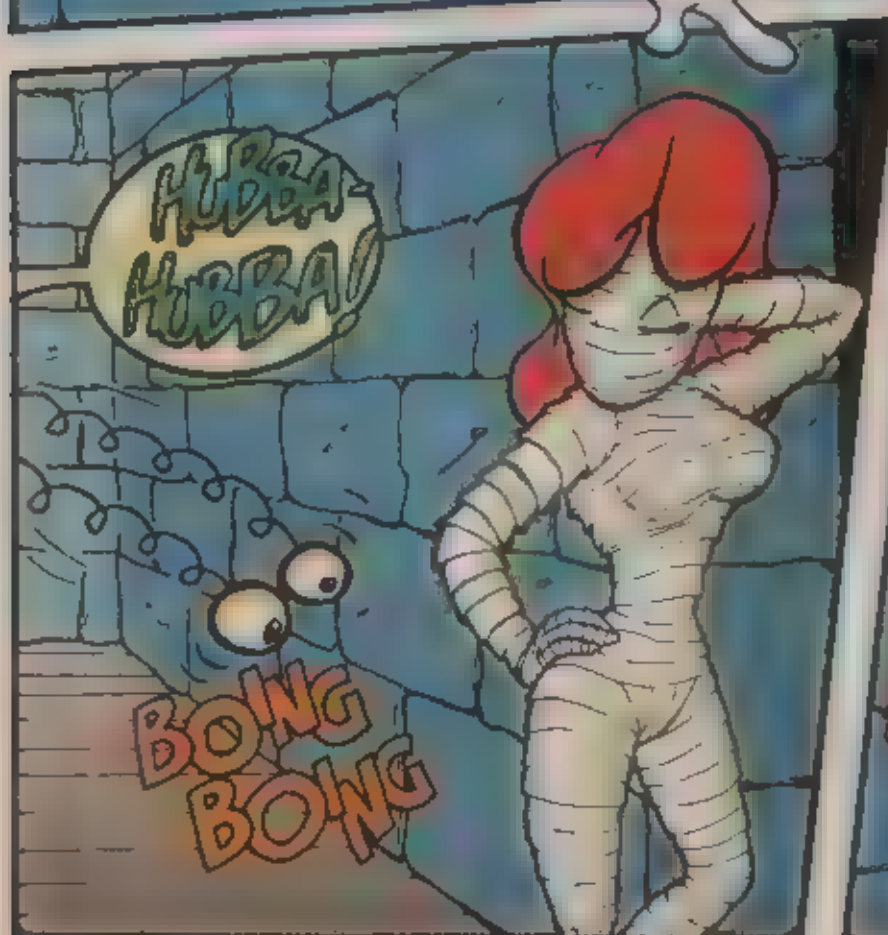
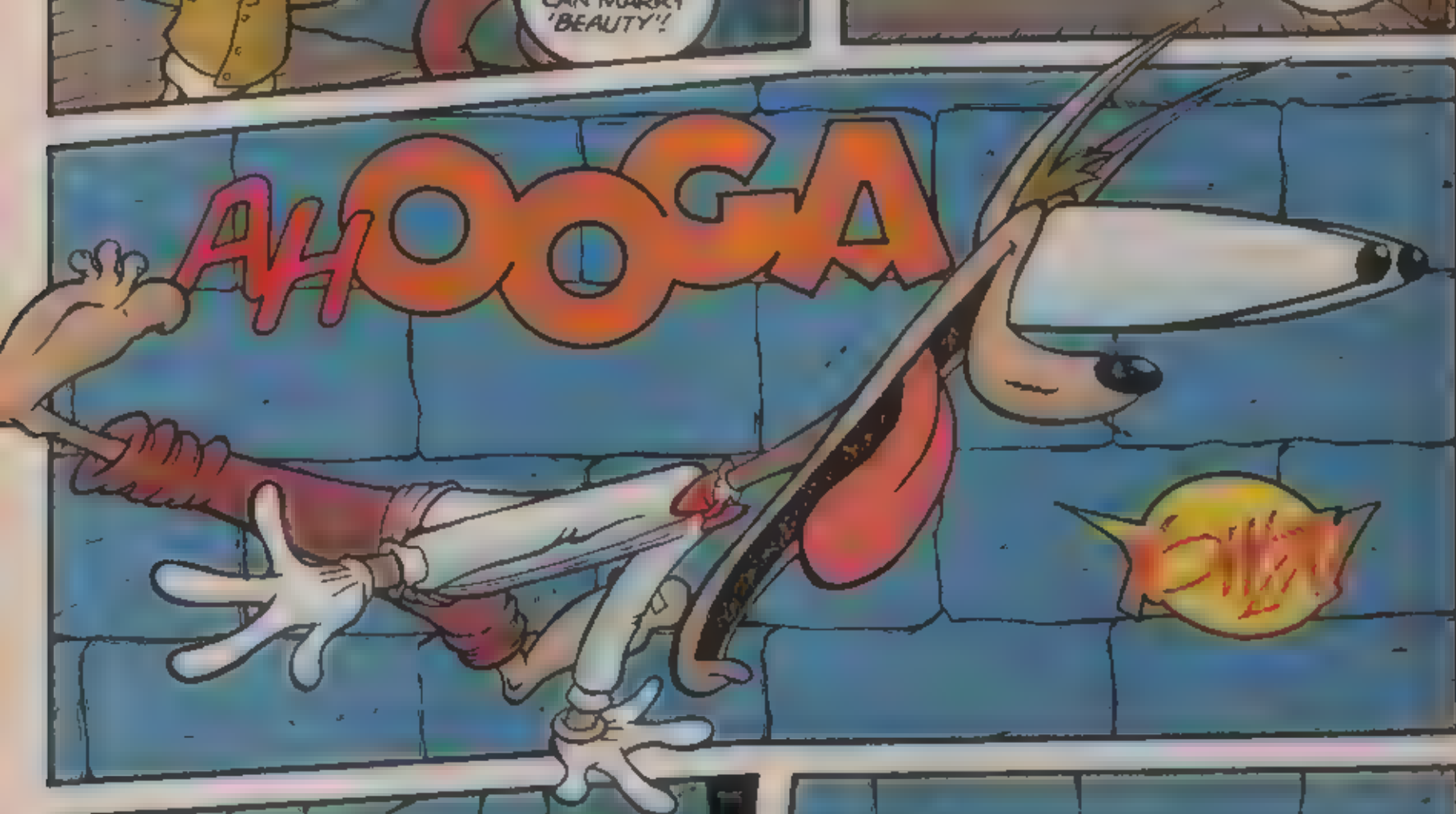
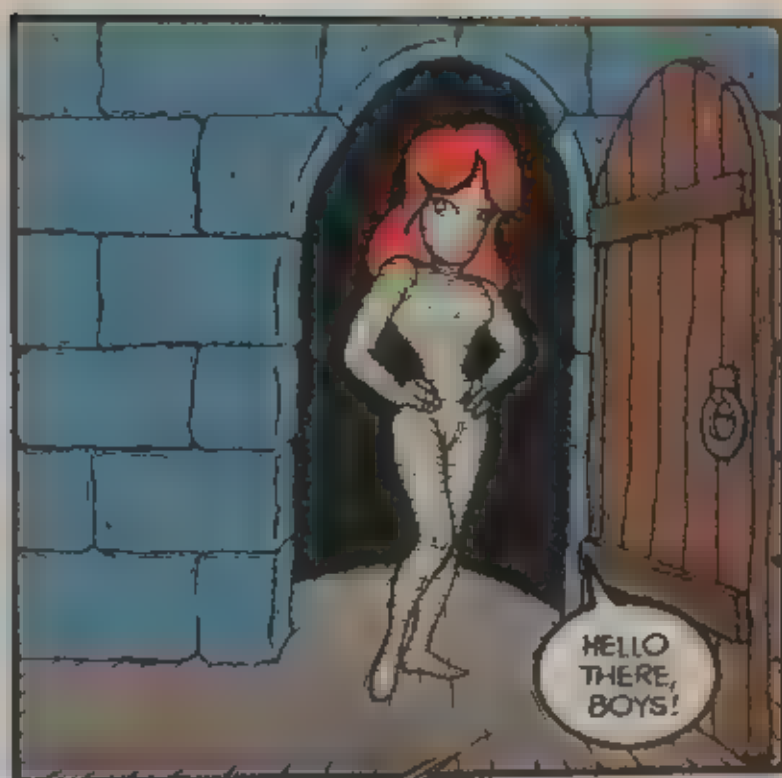
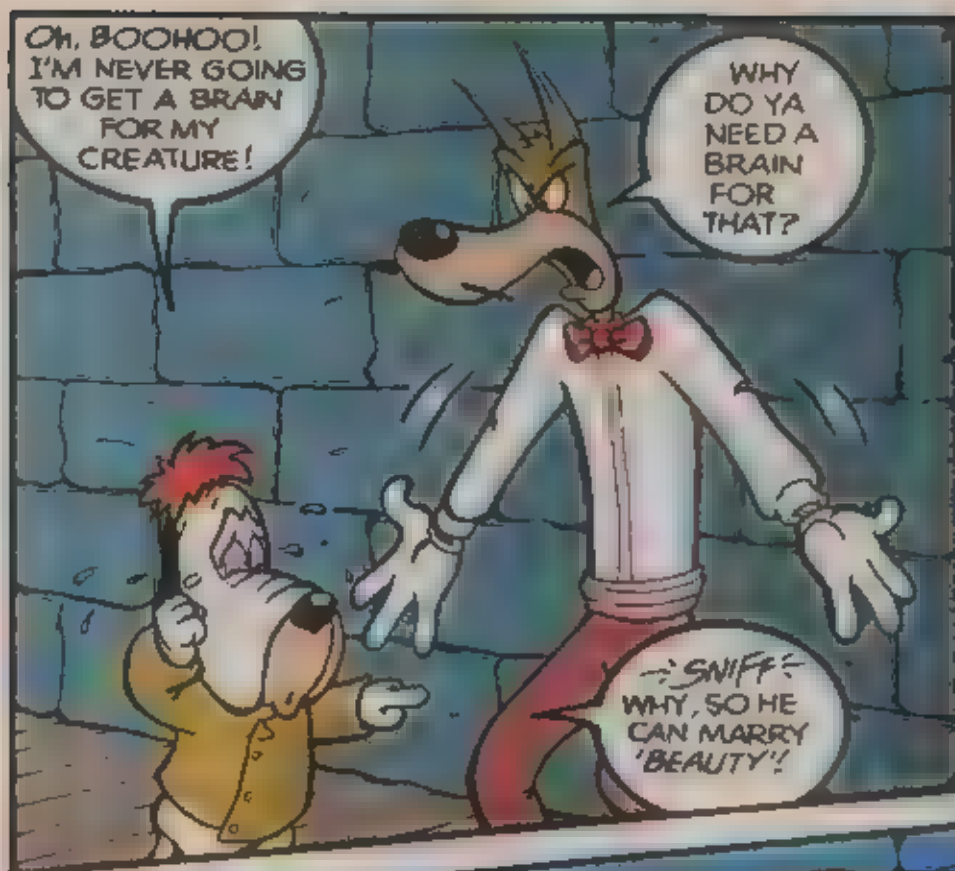


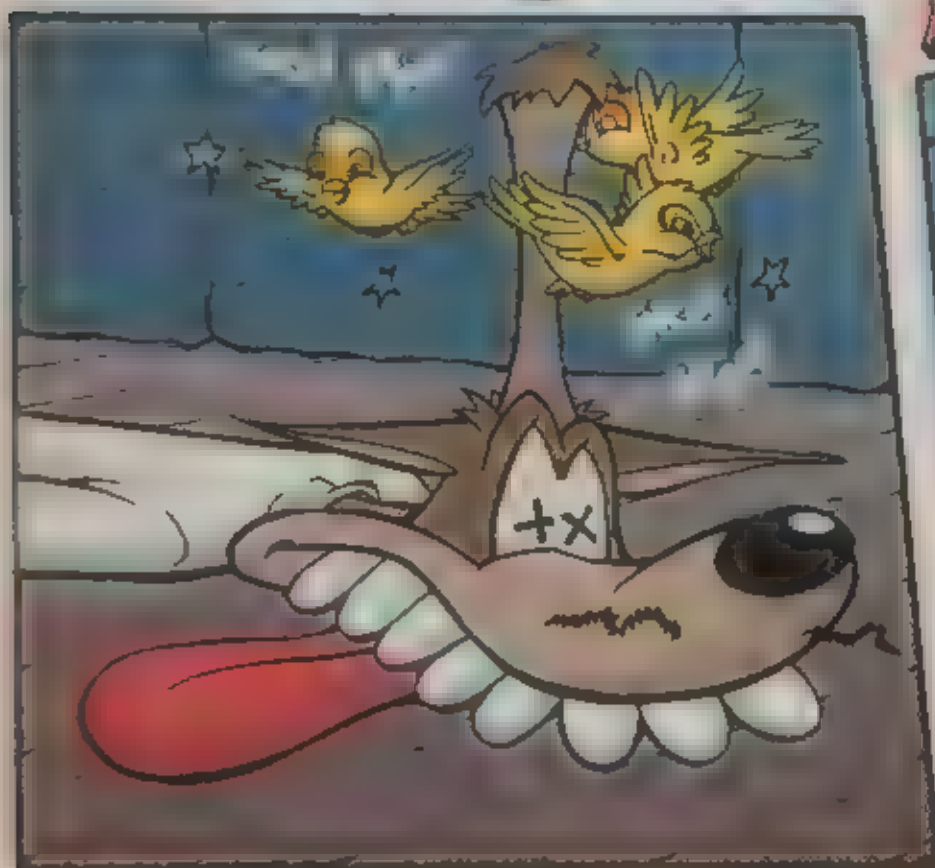
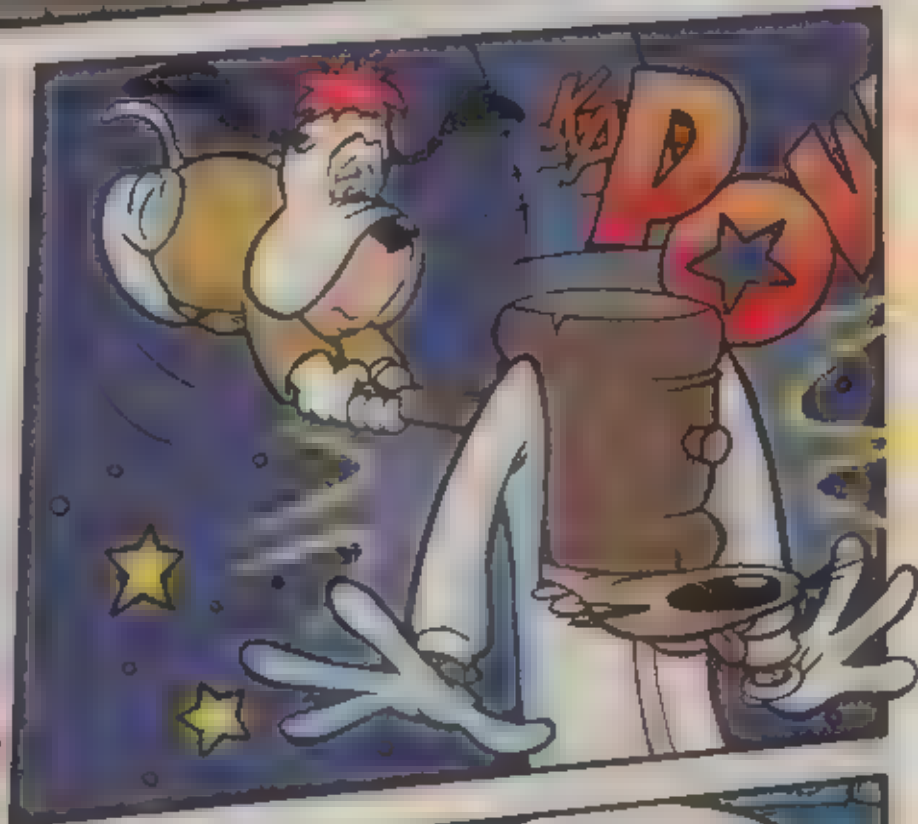
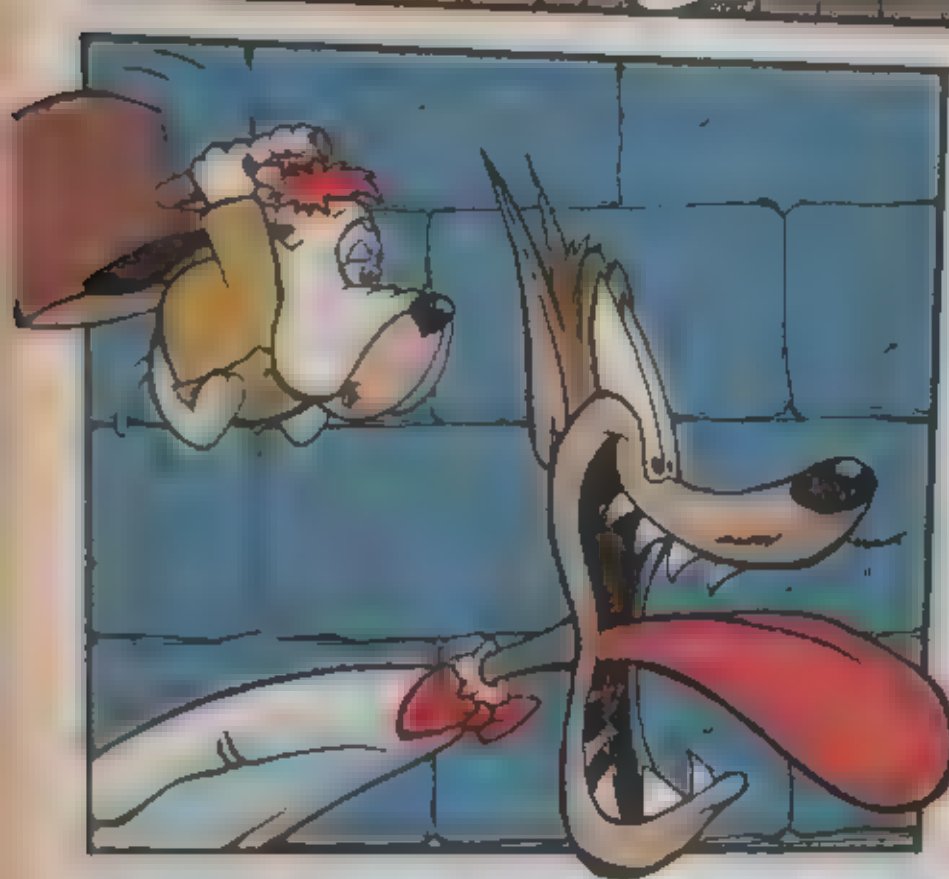
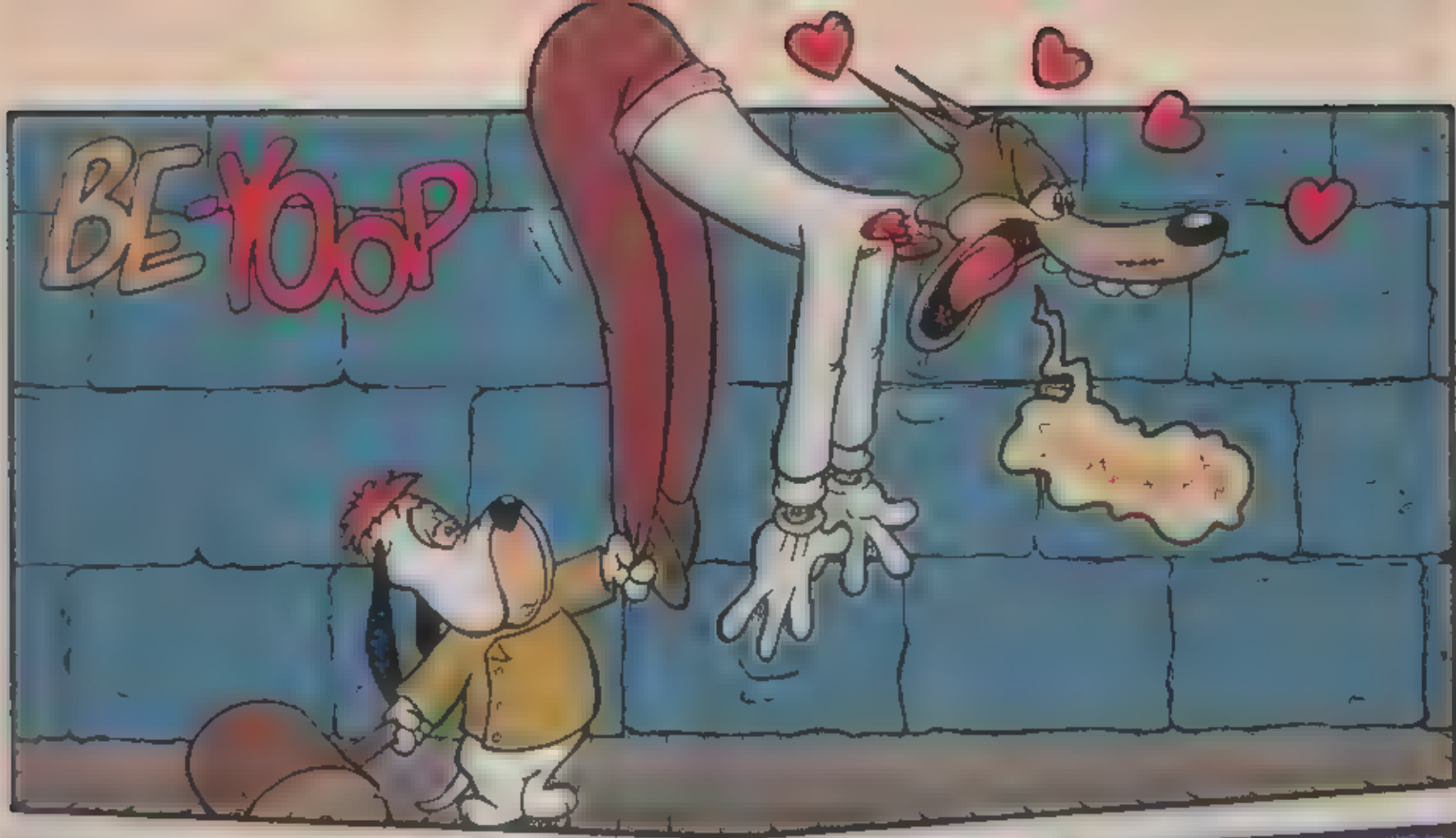


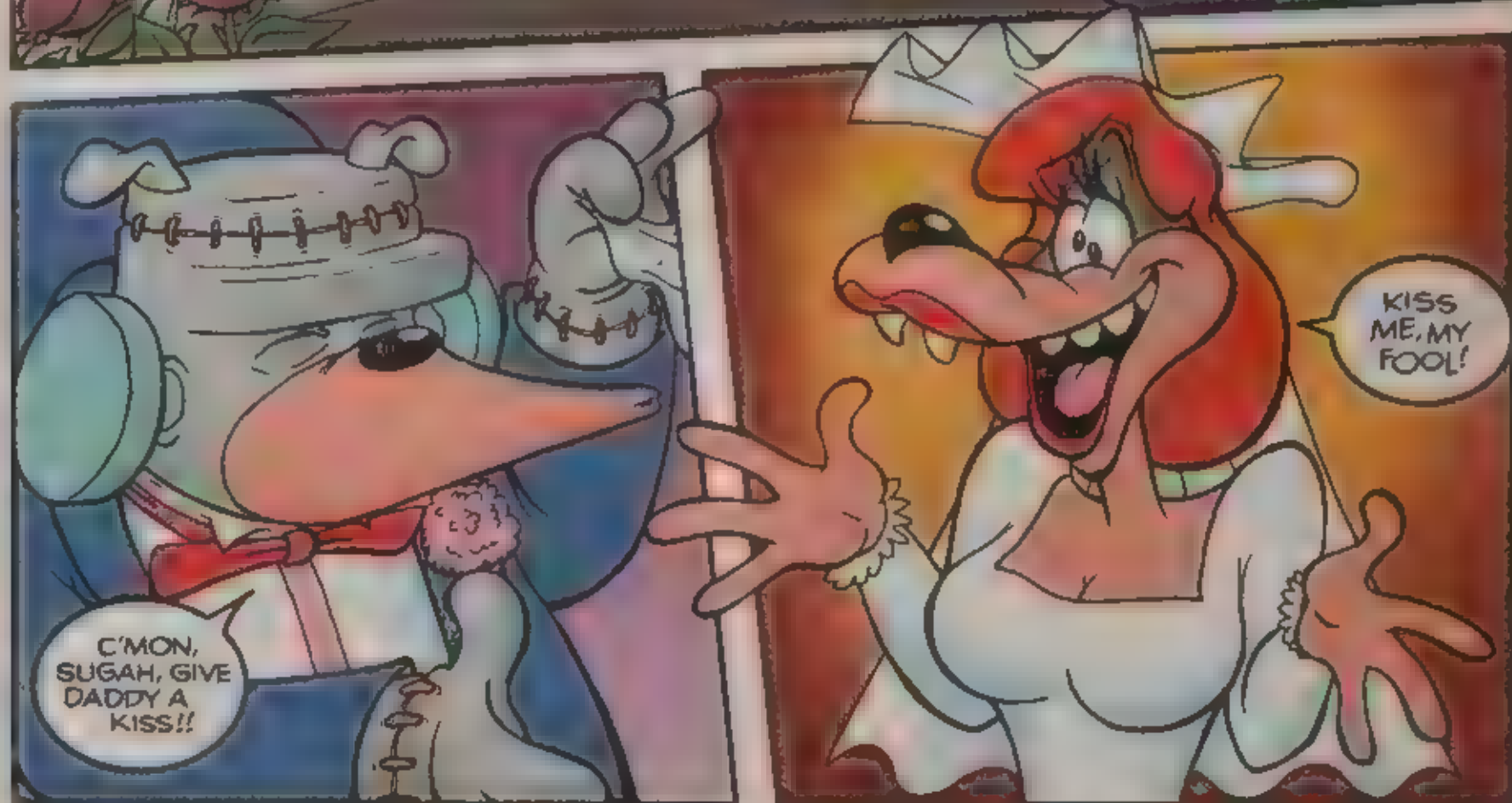


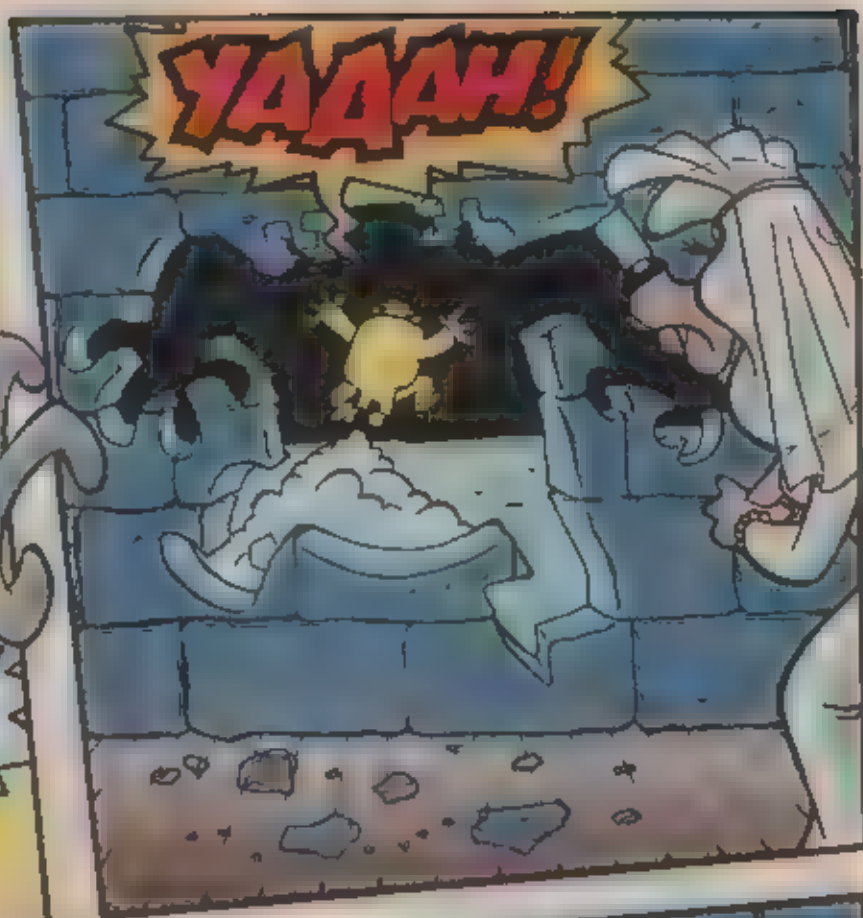






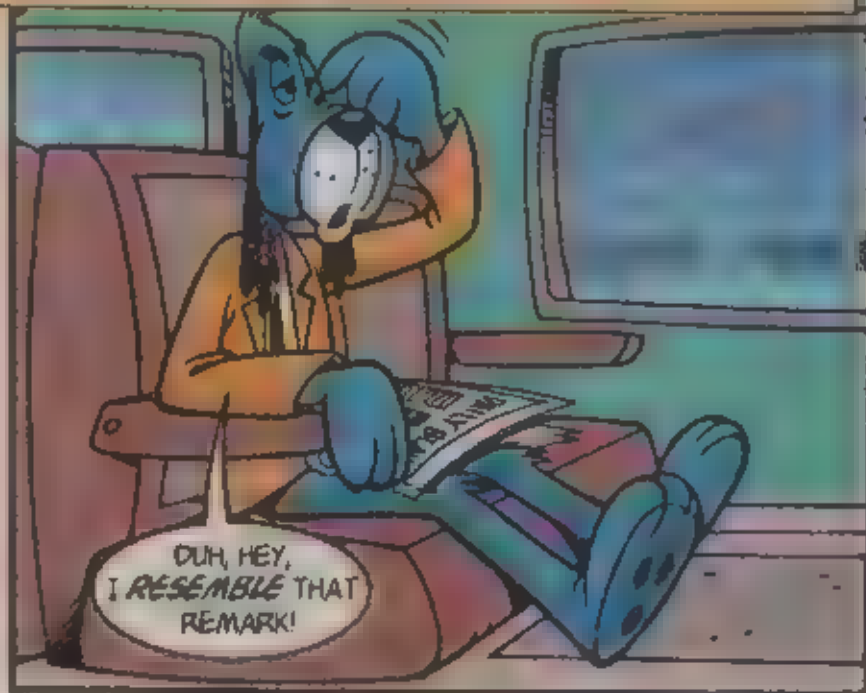






"YOU'RE LOOKING AT MEATHEAD J. MEATHEAD, A LESS-THAN-AVERAGE WORKING STIFF WHOSE ONLY GOAL AFTER FIVE PEE-EM IS GETTING HOME TO EAT A SMALL SUPPER THEN TURN IN FOR THE NIGHT. AN UNREMARKABLE FELLOW, WITH SMALL ASPIRATIONS AND AN EVEN SMALLER BRAIN

"... AND THIS DASHING FELLOW IS, IF YOU'LL PARDON THE EXPRESSION, THE PROVERBIAL SEATMATE FROM HELL. A SURLY, ARROGANT, NE'ER-DO-WELL HOOD WHOSE YEARNINGS ARE TO MAKE LIFE SLIGHTLY MORE TURBULENT FOR THE WORKING STIFF SEATED OPPOSITE HIM



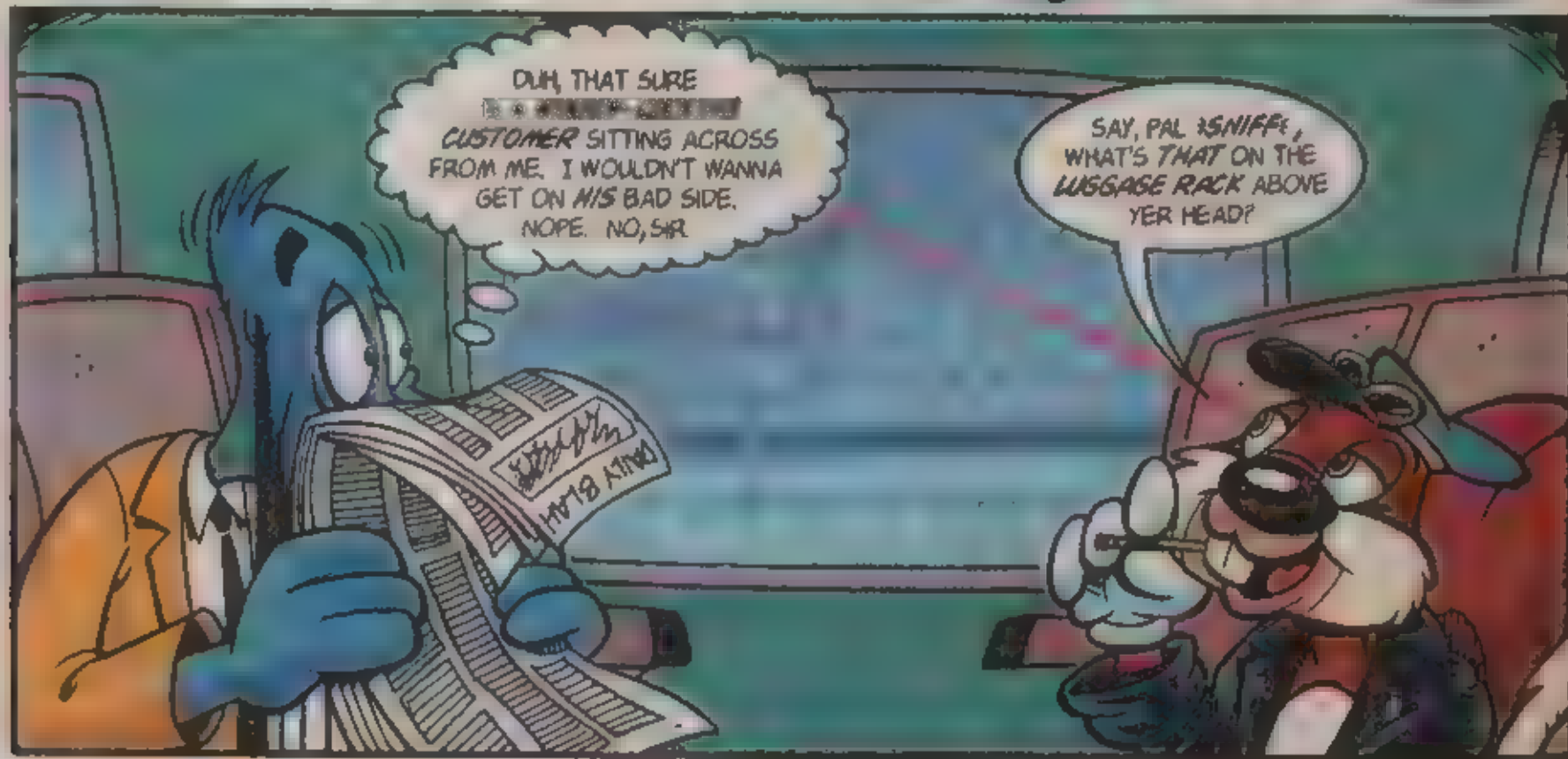
THE SETTING IS A COMMUTER TRAIN, HEADED FOR TROUBLE IN

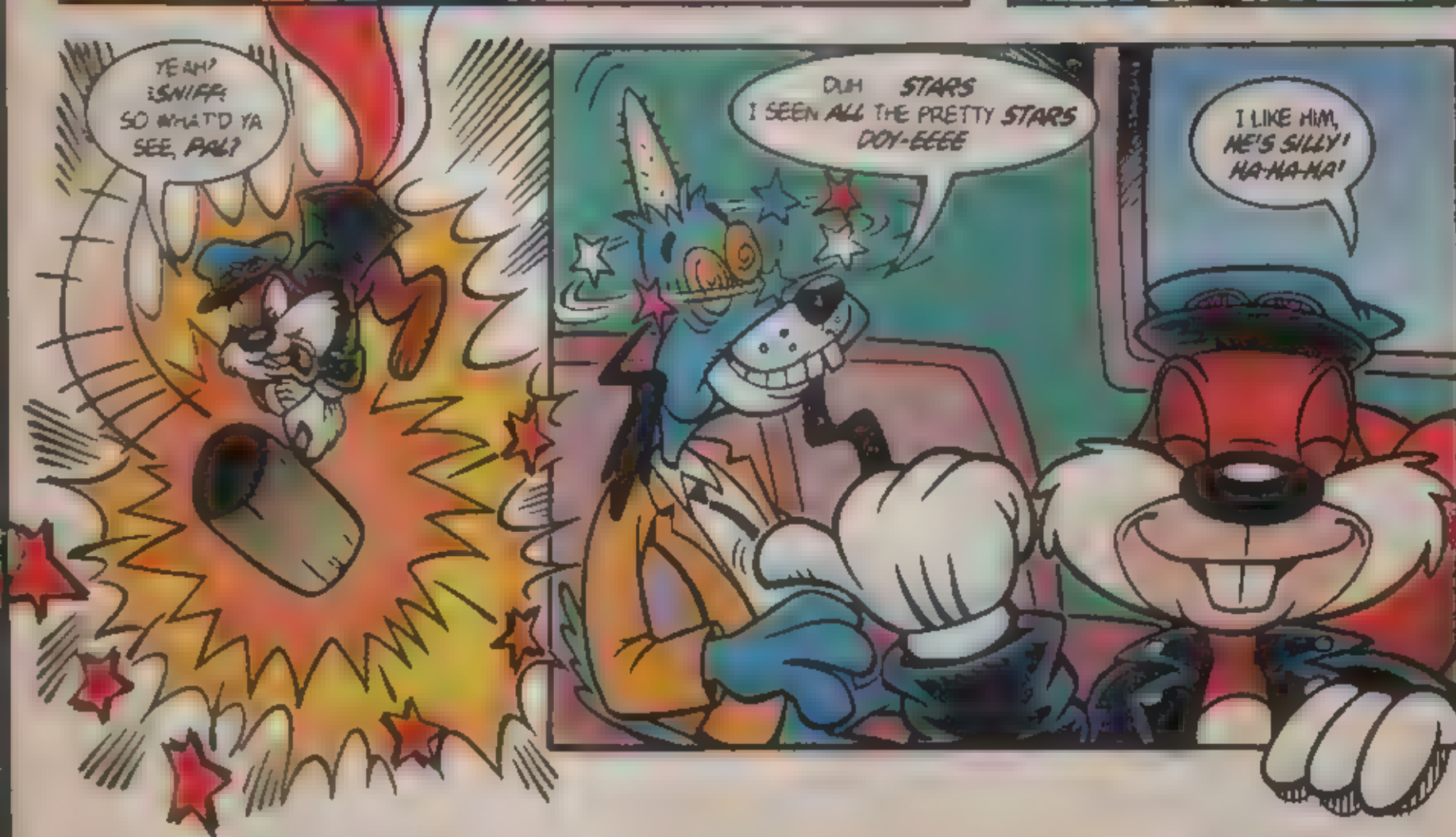
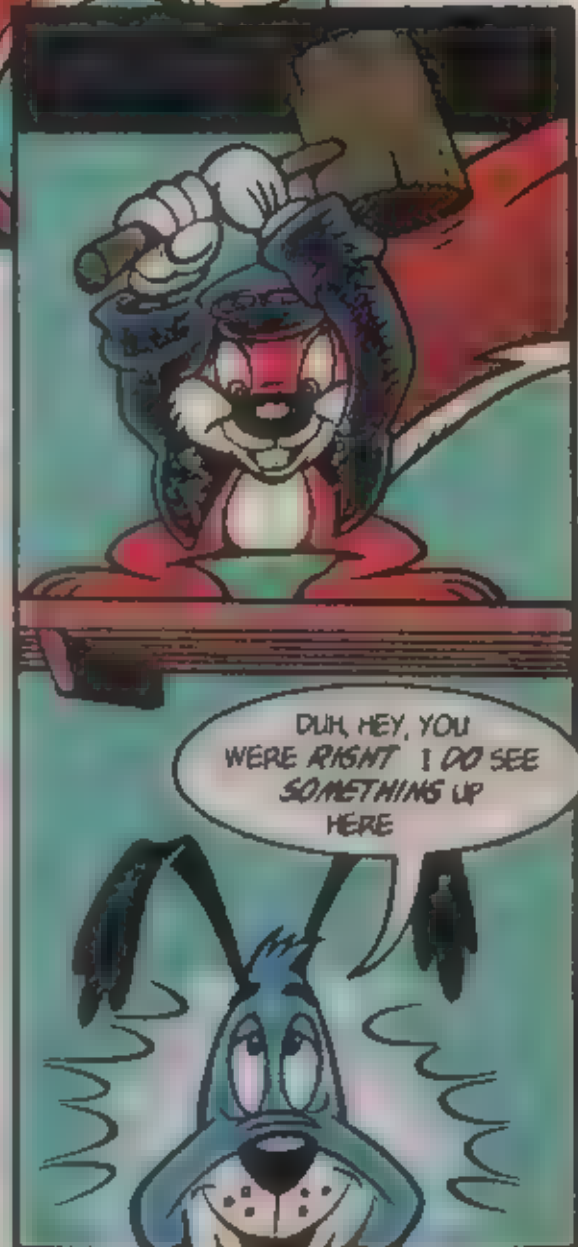
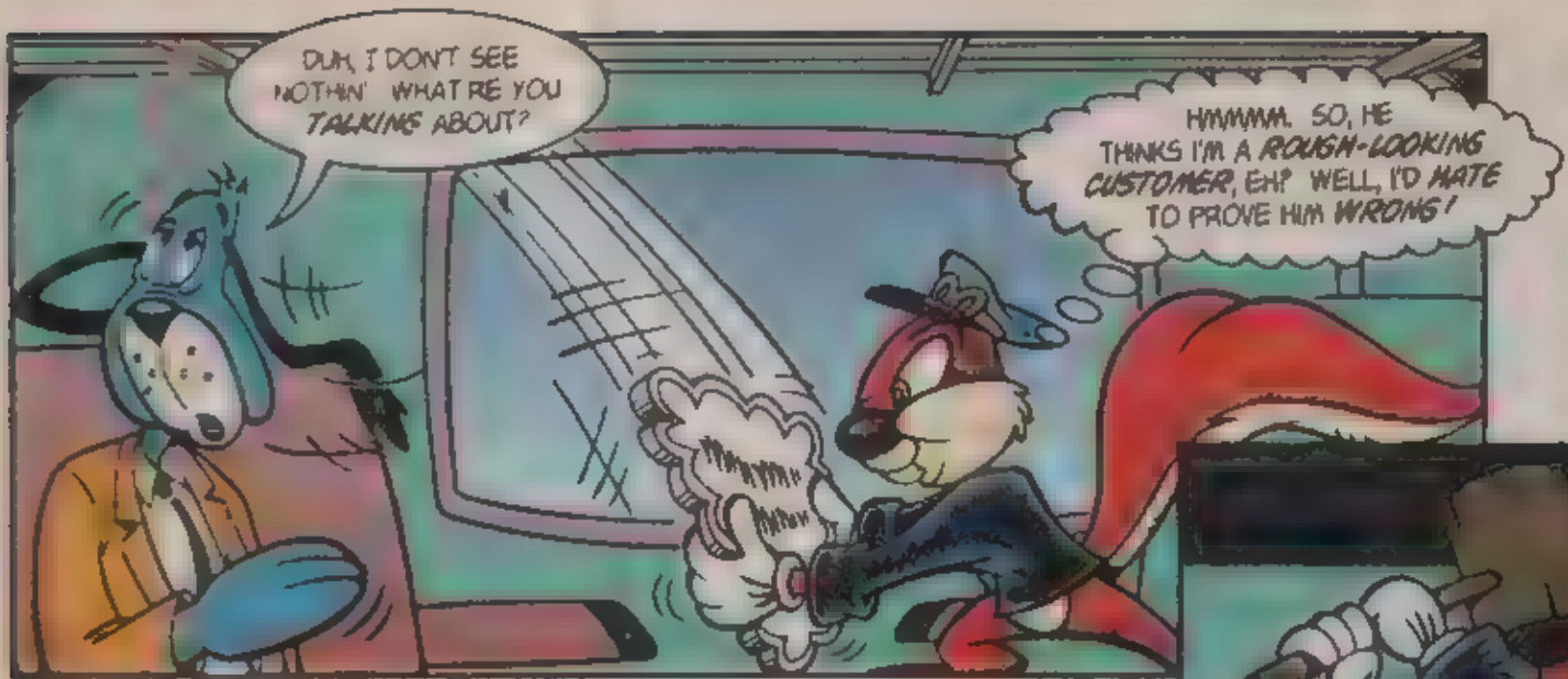
THE VIOLENT ZONE

Emc

DUH, THAT SURE ~~IS A~~ CUSTOMER SITTING ACROSS FROM ME. I WOULDN'T WANNA GET ON HIS BAD SIDE. NOPE. NO, SIR

SAY, PAL ISNIFFE, WHAT'S THAT ON THE LUGGAGE RACK ABOVE YER HEAD?









MY APOLOGIES
MR. BEAR MAY I PUNCH
THAT FOR YOU?

HERE'S MY
TICKET I'M NOT WITH
THE FREELoader

MAY I PUNCH
THAT FOR YOU?



NO OFFENSE, PAL
I HATE TO BE THE BEARER
OF BAD TIDINGS AND BEAR A
GRUDGE BUT I JUST CAN'T BEAR
TO HAVE MY NAME BESMIRCHED
BY THE LIKES OF YOU. BEAR
IT IN MIND



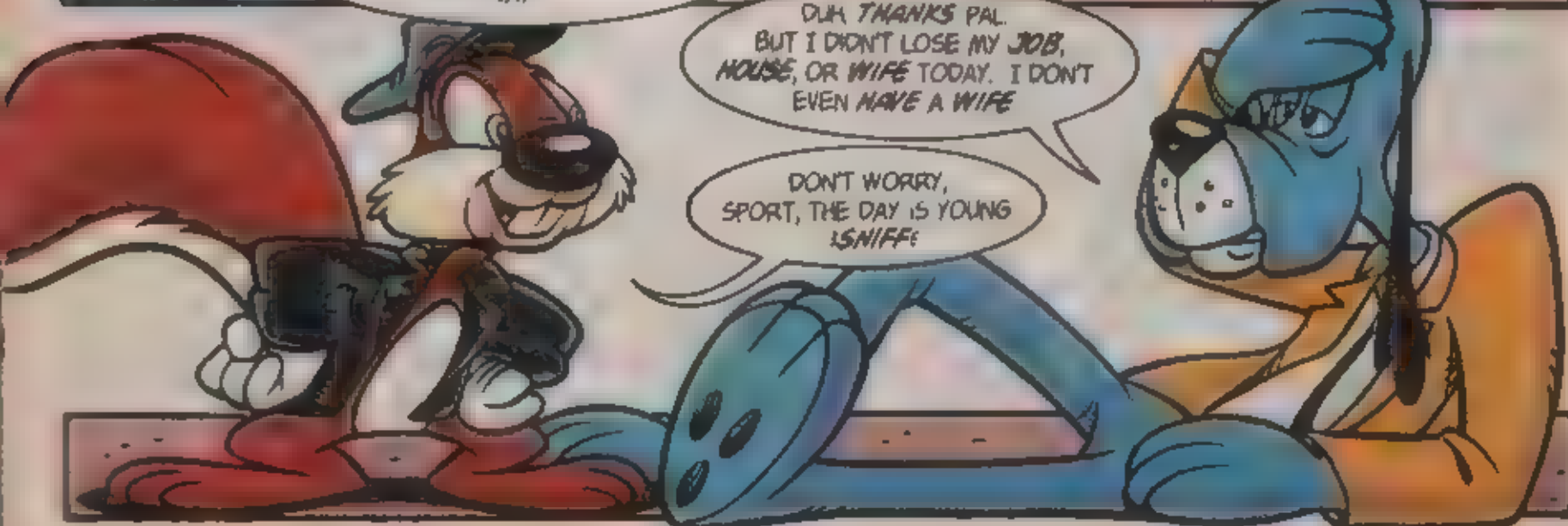
I'M GOING TO
HAVE TO GIVE THIS RAIL-
BUM THE BOOT. NEXT STATION
I'M SICKING THE RAIL-DICKS
ON HIM

HAVE A HEART,
BUDDY. ¹SNIFF! THIS POOR
SLOB JUST LOST HIS JOB TODAY, HAD
HIS HOUSE FORECLOSED ON, AND HIS WIFE
LEFT HIM FOR ANOTHER FELLA. SHOW
SOME CLEMENCY, ¹ BESEECH
YA!



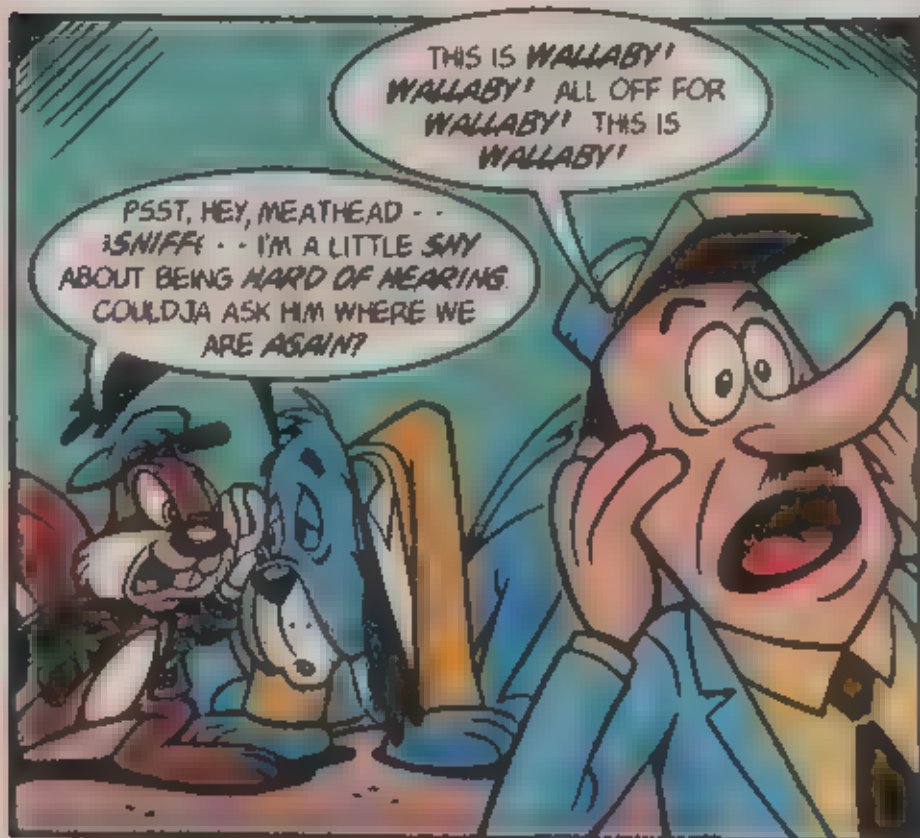
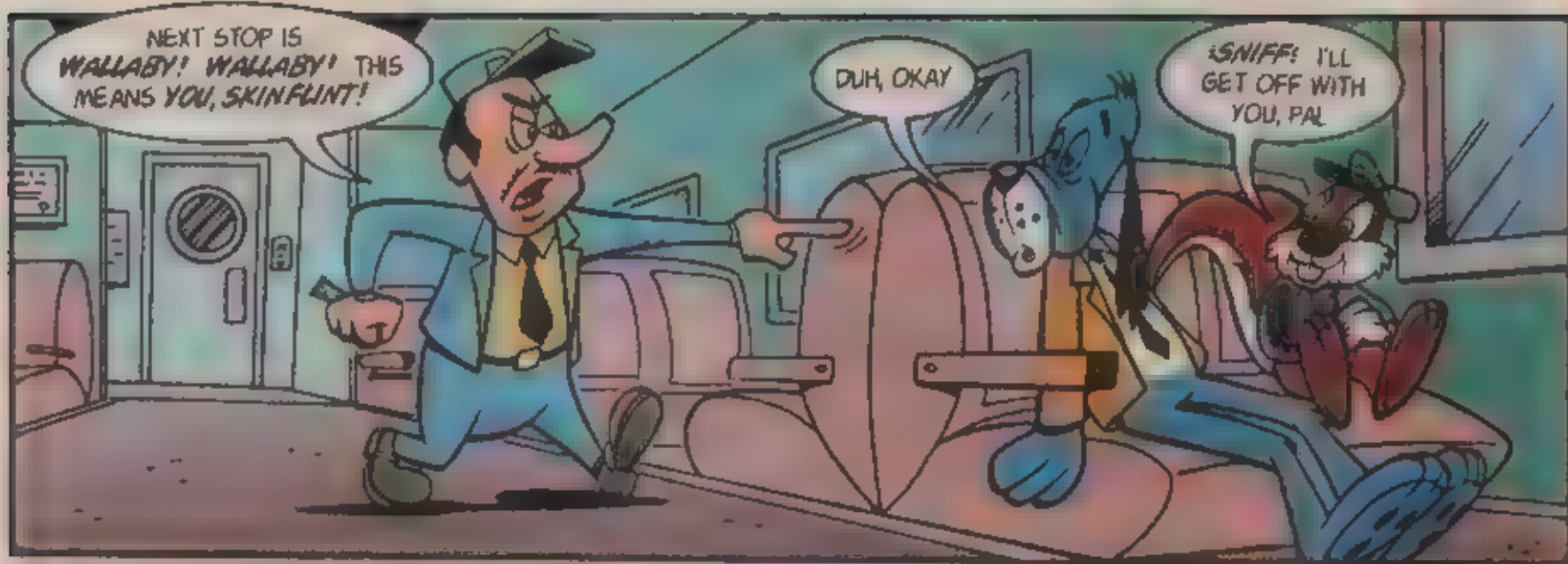
WELL, I WON'T
SET THE RAIL-DICKS ON
HIM, BUT HE'LL HAVE TO GET
OUT NEXT STOP

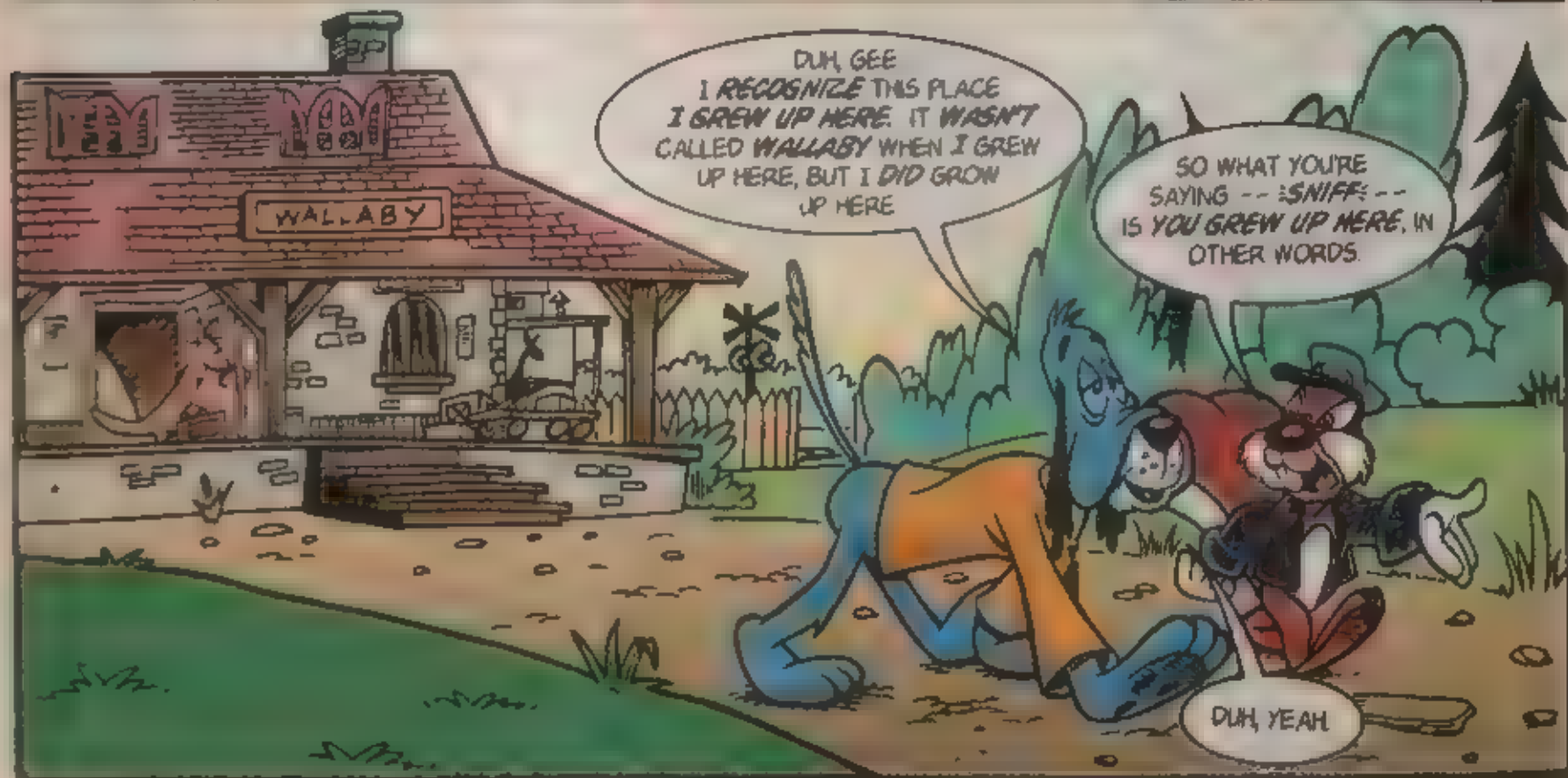
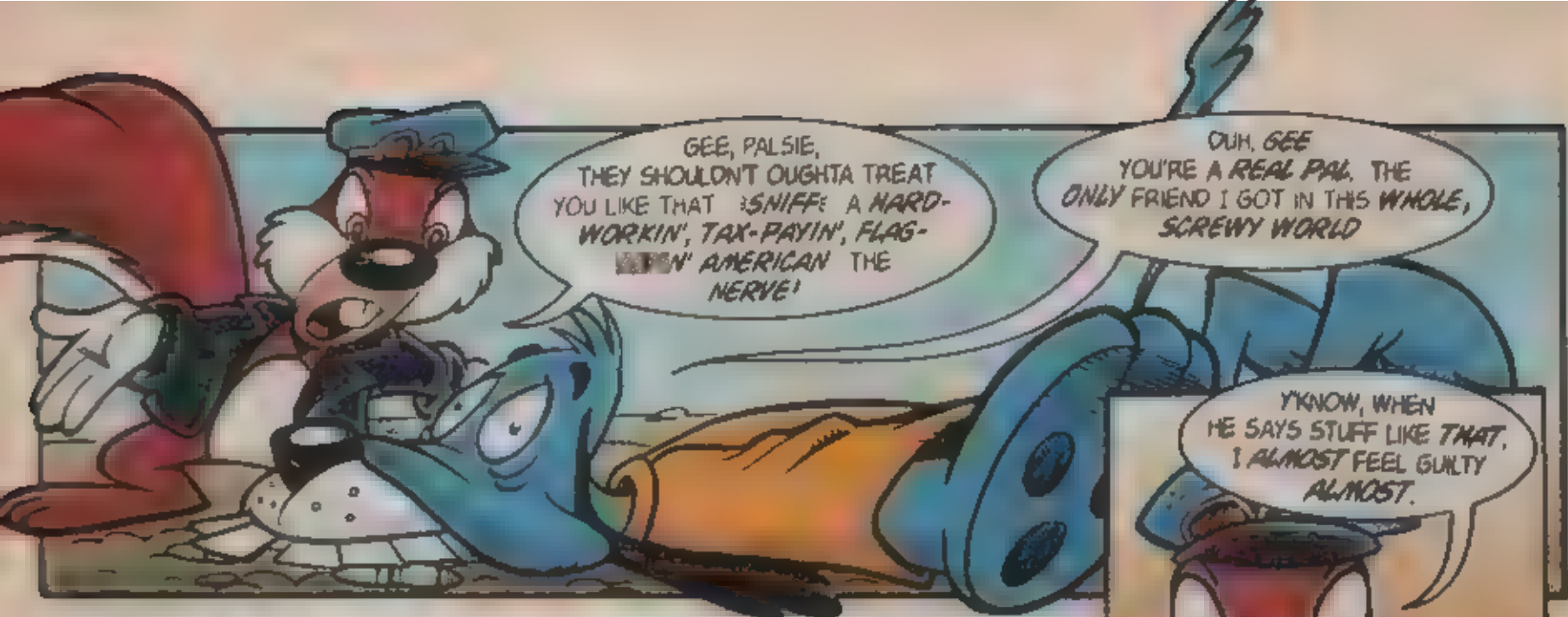
WOTTA
HUMANITARIAN! PUT
'ER THERE, PAL!

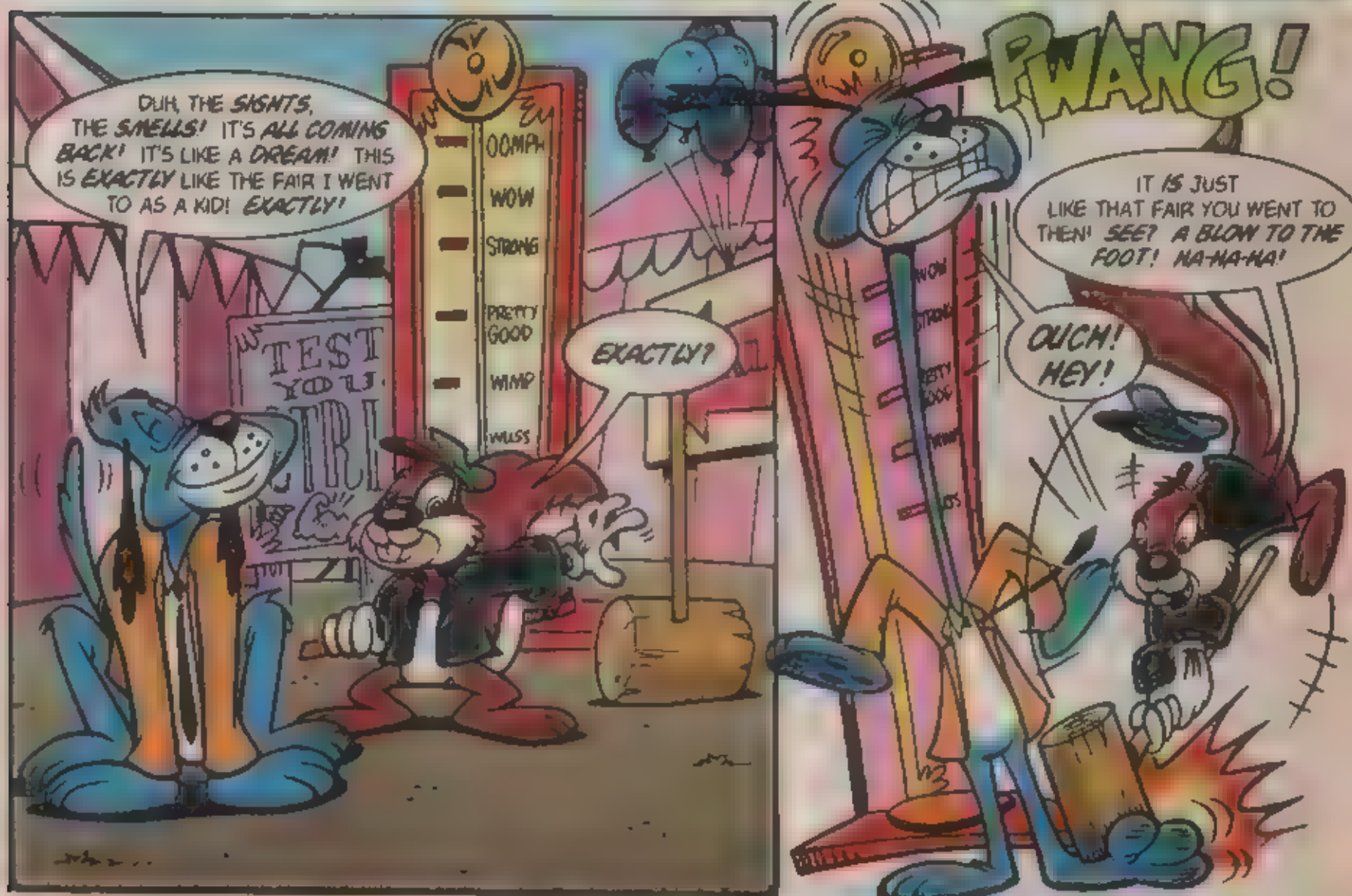
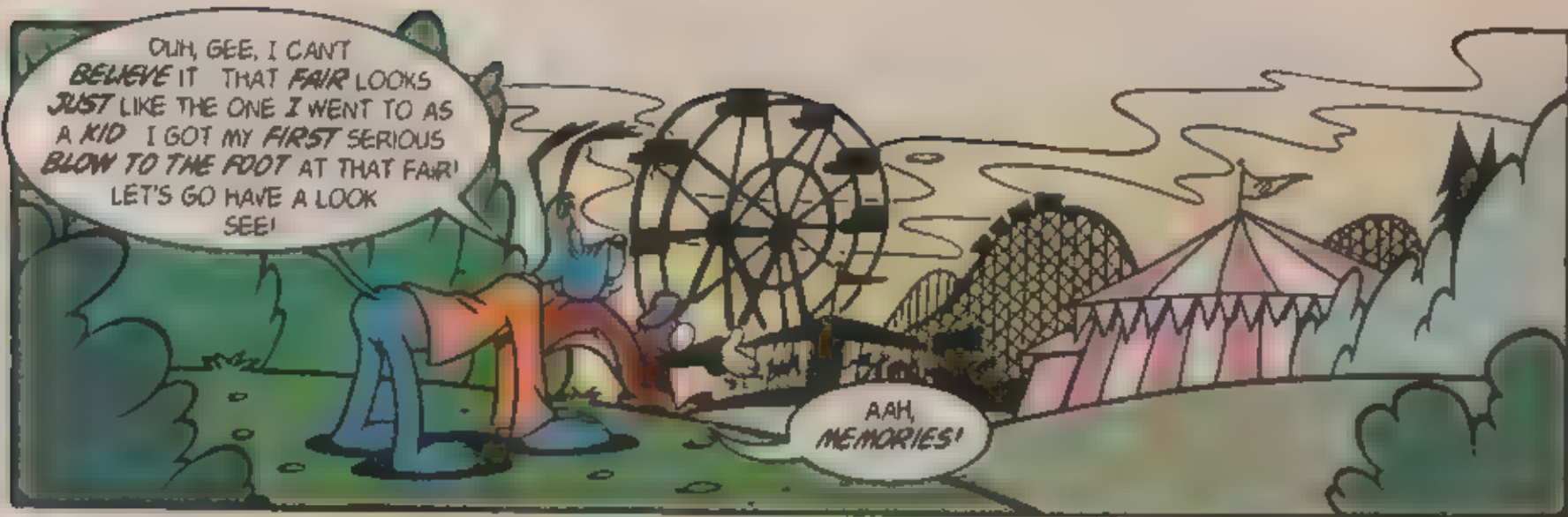


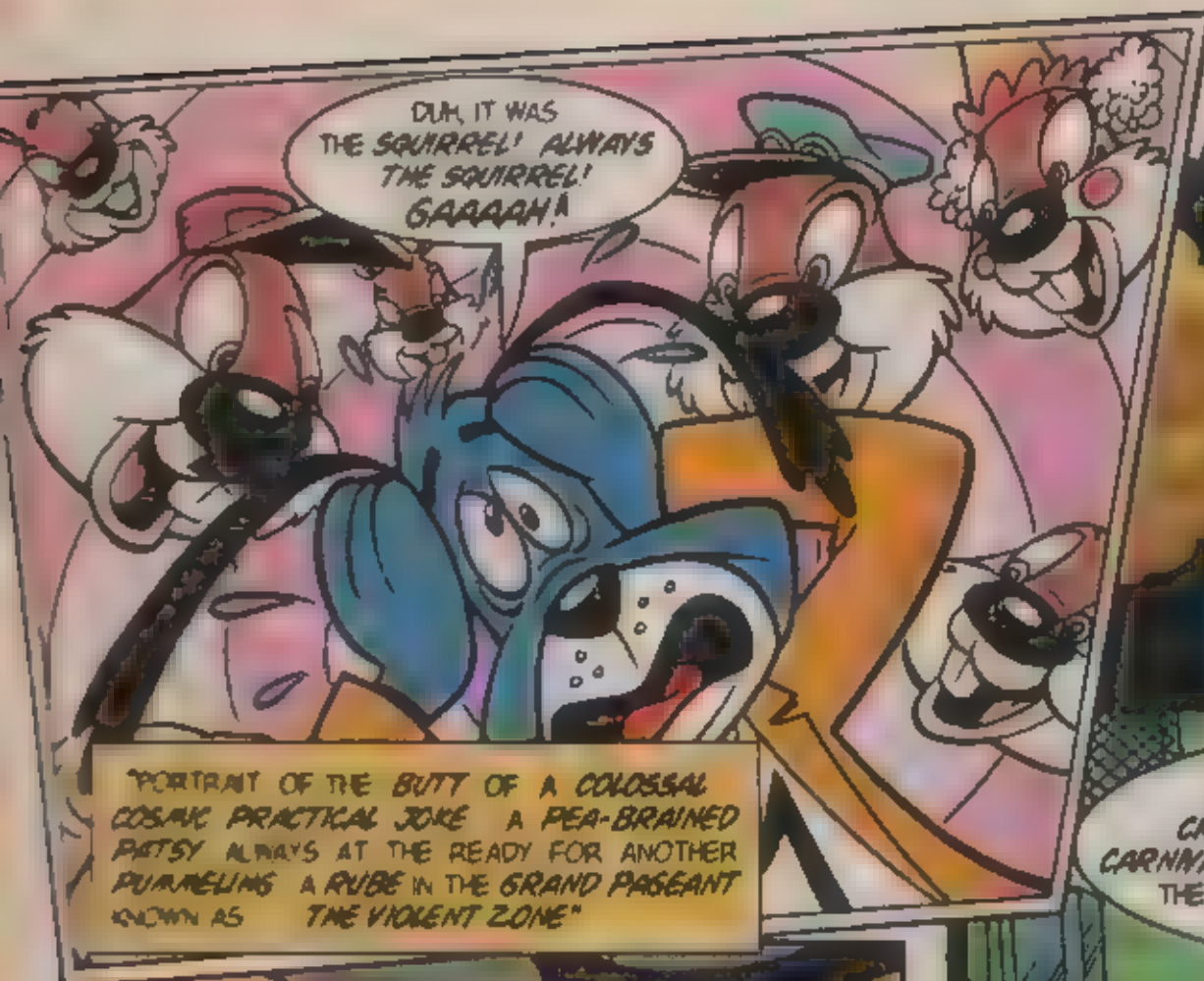
DUH THANKS PAL
BUT I DIDN'T LOSE MY JOB,
HOUSE, OR WIFE TODAY. I DON'T
EVEN HAVE A WIFE

DON'T WORRY,
SPORT, THE DAY IS YOUNG
¹SNIFF!









WELL, THAT OUGHTA WRAP THAT UP. AS USUAL, WE LEFT THE POOR SAP SWIRLING IN A MASS OF MADNESS

DUH, SO YOU ARE THE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS CRAZINESS, WITH THE WALLABIES AND CARNIVAL AND ALL LIKE THAT! WELL, LET'S CLEAR THE SMOKE AND GET A LOOK AT YOU, YOU LITTLE SQUIRREL

I JUST LOVE SPINNING THESE YARNS AND PUTTING THESE LITTLE FISHERS THROUGH THEIR PAGES. HEH-HEH

SURE THING, BUB

N-NO IT CAN'T BE!

WELL, HE DID SAY IT WAS ALWAYS THE SQUIRREL, DIDN'T HE? !SNIFF!

NEXT ISSUE:

DROOPY

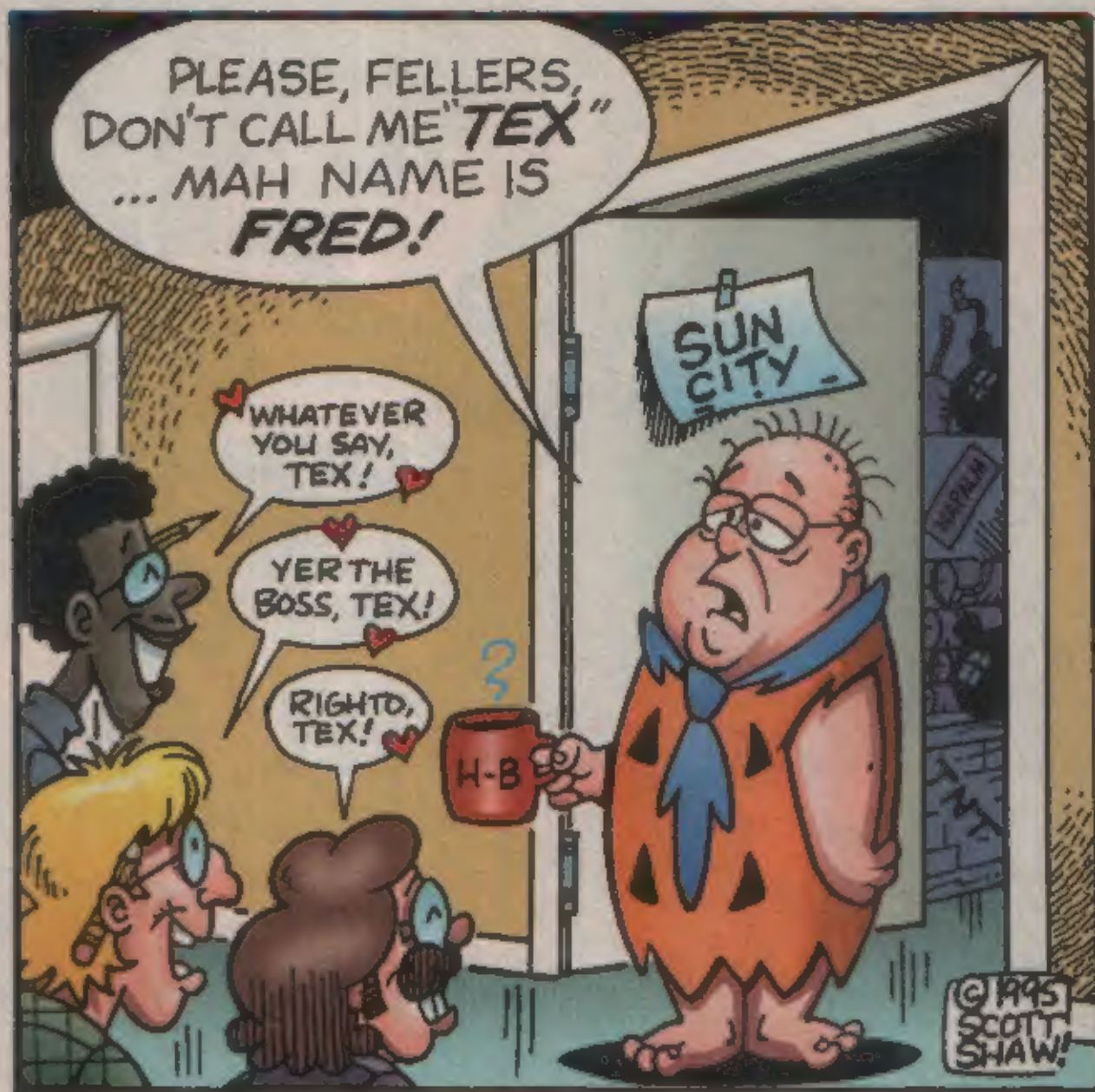


Droopy and Spike enter a contest to see who can bring home the best-dressed turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. But capturing a plump, juicy piece of poultry isn't as easy as it seems when the only turkey they can find is a scrawny-looking, smart-mouthed bird who does everything it can to avoid capture!

#2 COMING NOVEMBER!

Walt & Red

“NOTES FROM GENERATION TEX”



BY SCOTT SHAW!

WHEN I HEARD THAT DARK HORSE COMICS WAS PLANNING TO DO A SERIES OF COMIC BOOKS BASED ON MGM CHARACTERS CREATED BY TEX AVERY, I WAS DETERMINED TO BECOME INVOLVED, AND HERE I AM. BUT MY INVOLVEMENT WITH TEX GOES BEYOND INKING A HANDFUL OF COMIC-BOOK STORIES; I HAD THE REMARKABLY GOOD FORTUNE TO ACTUALLY WORK WITH TEX AVERY!

Late in 1978, I was hired by Hanna-Barbera Productions to work as a designer and layout artist on the less-than-imaginatively titled “The New Fred and Barney Show.” I had already been working on its Marvel-published line of comic books for a few years — partially edited and mostly written by Mark Evanier (*Crossfire*) — and, although enjoying the freelance lifestyle, couldn’t resist the lure of working on my all-time favorites, The Flintstones. I wasn’t Hanna-Barbera’s only recent recruit from the world of comic books, though; the studio was rife with fresh funny-book talent, including Mike Sekowsky (*Justice League of America*), Russ Heath (*Haunted Tank*), Dave Stevens (*The Rocketeer*), Carol Lay (*Now, Endsville*), Geof Darrow (*Hard Boiled*), Will Meuginot (*DNAgents*), Rick Hoberg (*The Strangers*), and Paul Power (*Professor Om*), among others. (These were in addition to many notable cartoonists who had divided their careers between comic books and animation for years, such as Doug Wildey, Alex Toth, Bob Foster, Floyd Norman, Pete

Alverado, Owen Fitzgerald, Jack Manning, Mo Gollub, and Dan Noonan.) Even Jack Kirby was occasionally present, dropping off artwork for some new project he was helping to develop. It was a good place for a young cartoonist to be, not only for the valuable on-the-job training provided by more experienced artists, but also for the mutual support and competition between such young talents.

Remember, this was many years before such classy animated series as "The Simpsons," "Ren and Stimpy," and "Batman: The Animated Series" — we had to endure working on shows like "The New Shmoo," "Casper and the Angels," and "The Super Globetrotters." (By comparison, "The New Fred and Barney Show" seemed downright hip!) But the novices among us — myself included — were so damn delighted to be treated as professional cartoonists, often working alongside some of our favorite childhood talents, that our enthusiasm far outweighed our dismay at some of the less-than-memorable projects to which we found ourselves assigned. Considering the state of the industry at the time, we had no reason to expect anything more. Then, one day, a wonderful rumor rapidly spread from cubicle to cubicle: Tex Avery was coming to work at Hanna-Barbera! Yeah, you got it, bub — *Tex Avery!!!*

We'd all seen (infrequently, at best — remember, these were the days before videotape was readily available) Tex's classic shorts for Warner Brothers, MGM, and Walter Lantz Studios and thought they were unbelievably bust-a-gut funny. And Joe Adamson's book, *Tex Avery: King of Cartoons*, had just been published, so we all knew a bit about Tex's stellar career. But no one in our lower echelons of animation knew just what to expect from the legendary animation veteran himself. Was he a wild man? A dictator? A drunk? A burnout? Did he still "have it"? And what the hell was he doing at Hanna-Barbera?

For years, after leaving theatrical shorts, Tex ran his own small production company, Cascade Studios, doing a number of animated commercials and creating, among others, memorable commercial spokescharacters such as the Raid bugs and the notorious Frito Bandito. He had also worked with the gonzo musician Spike Jones, concocting gags for Jones' weekly live-action TV series. Due, in part, to poor health, Tex had recently shut down Cascade and was doing some freelance development work from home for his old rivals at MGM, Bill Hanna and Joseph

Barbera. (In a recent interview, I asked Bill and Joe what cartoons — other than their own — made them laugh; without hesitation, both men answered "Tex Avery's.") Apparently, NBC execs had been complaining about the lack of funniness in recent Hanna-Barbera cartoons for their network, so Tex was offered a staff position as the studio's "gag doctor." His first assignment? Believe it or not, it was to edit and inject gags into storyboards for Hanna-Barbera's bizarre version of Marvel's "The Thing." Will Meuginot, who was the lead storyboard artist for the series, was impressed at the old-timer's ability to generate a plethora of gags, seemingly without effort, despite his undeniably failing health. Will typifies Tex as "a genuinely nice guy who never had a bad word to say about anyone."

As I've said, Hanna-Barbera's creative staff, especially its younger members, were anxiously awaiting Tex's arrival. But none of us were prepared to meet the *real* Tex Avery. Somehow, he seemed to be the living embodiment of one of his most famous characters, Droopy. *This chubby, slow-moving, utterly unassuming little gentleman insisted we call him "Fred" (his real name) and not Tex. (We couldn't help but ignore this request; after all, who else were we gonna call "Tex"?)* Tex's speech pattern was also reminiscent of one of his characters; like the Daws Butler-voiced wolf that appears in many of the Droopy cartoons, Tex's syntax was liberally peppered with the word "man" for emphasis.

I don't think Tex ever really had the remotest idea of just how much we revered his work or in what high esteem we held him. Let's face it, this was not the high point of the man's career. Many top cartoonists have spent their final years in obscurity at one or another of Hollywood's animation factories. But Tex still had plenty to offer, and his ego was only large enough to allow him to assume his characters, stories, and gags were worth committing to film and screening for an audience. Beyond that, Tex acted like one of us: older, slower, but (in his mind) just another cartoonist working in the trenches.

Needless to say, we immediately fell in love with the man. We were constantly hanging around Tex's office across the hall from Recording Studio A, hoping for a glimpse of the "Living Artifact of Days Gone by When Cartoons Were Actually Funny" as he'd shuffle by. We'd even leave clippings, gag sketches, and letters of appreciation at Tex's door, which soon bore his hand-lettered sign labeling his office "Sun

City" (a reference to a famous Southern California retirement community).

Informally, Tex occasionally collaborated with Larz Bourne, a director and gag man who had co-created Baby Huey, among others, for Paramount, and was also working at Hanna-Barbera. But once on staff, Tex gained an official partner who would eventually carry on many of his projects to completion. Like Tex, Chuck Couch had also been a director at MGM (doing Barney Bear shorts) and had the distinction of working as one of Carl Barks' partners as a gag-writing "duck man" on Donald Duck shorts at Disney in its heyday. Where Tex was low-key and methodical, Chuck was (for his age, at least) an energetic chap who was as at home doing aerial photography from an airplane cockpit as in front of an animation disk. The two men had a good chemistry between them, and soon developed some new cartoon projects for Hanna-Barbera.

"Dino and Cavemouse" was a series of three-minute segments included in a massive ninety-minute Flintstones weekly show for NBC. These pitted Fred Flintstone's pet snorkasaurus Dino against a new household adversary in the form of Cavemouse. Tex designed Cavemouse, and storyboarded (with Tom Yakutis) and directed the first few episodes. Since there were 36 episodes overall to be made, Tex started to buy story premises and gags ("for three bits each" — that's \$75.00 in Tex-talk) from outside sources, which included then-freelance gag cartoonist Don Dougherty. I was lucky enough to supervise layouts on this series, occasionally tossing in a Bedrockian gag or two.

"Kwicky Koala" was a cute little marsupial possessing uncanny super-speed. His constant efforts to resist being consumed by Wilford Wolf (who'd originally had his taste buds set for the Three Little Pigs, but they'd since moved to Malibu, leaving Kwicky as the unexpected but tasty-looking resident of their wolf-proof cottage) provided the basis for a new series set to be aired by CBS. The show also included one-minute shorts featuring George and Joey, a.k.a. The Bungle Brothers, a pair of canine hams desperate to break into show biz at any cost. (Tex had little, if anything, to do with the show's other segments, "Crazy Claws" and "Dirty Dawg.") I was layout co-supervisor along with Floyd Notman on the "Kwicky" segments, and I did most of the layouts and prop designs for the "Bungle Brothers" segments. (Floyd also contributed quite a few gag ideas and storyboards for the Bungles, as did Don Dougherty.)

"Wind-Up Wolf" was a brilliant

creation, ideally conceived for a cartoon market that was in the grip of an anti-violence bias. Wind-Up Wolf is the key-powered robotic brain child of the Big Bad Wolf, built to take the collisions, explosions, and falls that his master is no longer willing to endure. Wind-up could be blown up, smashed, mangled, and otherwise demolished, only to be reassembled in time for the next gag. And since he was only a robot, no one ever really got hurt! (Tex never got this concept into production, but I worked with Bill Hanna developing gags and storyboards for Wind-Up Wolf a few years ago, and Bill has recently resurrected and directed a new Wind-Up short for the Cartoon Network.)

I can't claim to have worked all that closely with Tex Avery, but to my knowledge, none of us did. We were just a tiny bit too intimidated by the man's accomplishments and reputation to get to know him well. Besides, even at his advanced years and frail condition, he was practically a one-man production company in himself. We were also vaguely aware of Tex's failing health and tried to offer him the proper respect and consideration for a person needing to conserve his strength. (Will Meuginot recalls that Tex was constantly being asked to autograph the then-new Joe Adamson book; due to his failing eyesight and eye/hand control, Tex would take the books home to sign them privately, as carefully as humanly possible. "He always wanted to give everyone his best work," says Will, "even his autograph.")

But we were exposed to Tex enough to get a sense of the man and how he worked. He designed his own storyboards and model sheets for animation, which, though quite roughly drawn, were as exhaustively specific — and funny — as any I've ever seen. Tex was a gentleman, but never seemed worried about hurting anyone's feelings over a rejected gag . . . he'd make a pinched face as though smelling rotten eggs and exhale a long "Phewww!" as he shuffled the submitted gag to the bottom of the stack. That's when you *knew* it was time to go back to the drawing board. When Tex repeated a gag himself (which he did occasionally), it was in order to hone and refine it, or to put a new spin on it, rather than fill screen time for expediency's sake. The one gag that Tex absolutely *hated* was the old chestnut where a character makes a fast exit through a wall, leaving a hole in the shape of its silhouette. He wasn't all that fond of the outrageous "take" gags he'd become famous for, either. He *did* like

using explosions, the bigger the better, in the execution of a gag. But most of all, Tex seemed to savor his cartoon's "quiet moments," as well as the characters' occasional low-key asides to the audience. Tex was a very intelligent, deliberate cartoonist who knew *exactly* what he wanted; it was almost as if he'd already made the cartoon in his head and was merely following an elaborate, if intangible, instruction sheet.

Unfortunately for all of us, Tex didn't really possess Droopy's hidden super-strength. One day in 1980 we got word Tex had collapsed in the stairwell at the studio's rear entrance and had been taken to the hospital. (Ironically, this was the first day that Don Dougherty reported for work at the studio, after finally accepting Tex's offer of a staff position; nevertheless, Don maintains being hired by Tex Avery remains the finest moment of his extensive professional career as a gag man.) Tex hated hospitals and claimed that if he was admitted into one, he'd probably never leave it. He was right.

While we're talking about depressing subjects, here's a Hollywood anecdote to rival the best — or *worst* — of 'em. A while before Tex's collapse, he had presented the pilot episode of "Kwicky Koala" to Ted Field and the rest of the brass at CBS' Children's Programming. It was a terrific cartoon considering the limitations of schedule and budget, full of Tex's inimitable touches and far superior than the other pap being produced for then-current Saturday-morning shows. It ended with Wilford Wolf being blown up in an innovatively tremendous montage of live-action explosions (including actual atomic bomb testing footage!). CBS flatly rejected broadcasting Tex's cartoon, claiming excessive violence as the reason. This undoubtedly depressed Tex, but he had no choice but to cooperate and continue to produce the show without any "forbidden" material. A few months passed, and sadly, in the interim, so did Tex. One day, we learned to our amazement that CBS had actually *reversed* its edict concerning Tex's rejected "Kwicky" short: not only would it be broadcast, but it would also bear a title card claiming it a "Tex Avery Classic"! Apparently, the lesson here was that a cartoonist had to *die* in order to get a funny cartoon on the air! Hey, no one ever claimed that Hollywood got its reputation by *accident* . . .

After Tex's death, we faced the queasy task of finishing "Dino and the Cavemouse,"

"Kwicky Koala," and "The Bungle Brothers" without Tex's involvement. Fortunately, we still had Chuck Couch involved with the projects, and his knowledgeable input was every bit as valuable as Tex's. But it just wasn't the same without Tex.

But let's end this on an upbeat note, so here's my favorite story about Tex. I'll never forget when, during preproduction on "Dino and Cavemouse," the studio's creative director decided to take it upon himself to re-design Tex's design for Cavemouse. One day I was handed this new version, which looked more like Scooby-Doo wearing Mickey Mouse ears than a prehistoric rodent. Those of us in layout were disappointed and a bit outraged; how dare anyone tell Tex how to draw?! My partner Floyd Norman and I immediately sat down and scribbled out a couple of gag sketches. Mine depicted Tex in a wild "take," getting his first look at the supposedly "improved" version of Cavemouse. Floyd's showed Tex flipping the creative director back and forth over his head and slamming him to the ground, Droopy-style. Covertly, we slipped our drawings under Tex's door and crept away. A few days later, we were informed circumstances had mysteriously changed, and Tex's version of Cavemouse was again the only version to be used. Tex had prevailed! The Forces of Funniness had won! I went down to Tex's office to congratulate him. He wasn't in, but there were Floyd's and my drawings, taped to the wall above Tex's desk at eye level. That was all I had to see to know where we stood with Tex, and it still remains as one of the most satisfying moments of my cartooning career.

If there's a happy ending to all this, it would have to be that Tex's work is vastly more well known and accessible than it was in Tex's lifetime. Among television, cable, home video, laser discs, jewelry, statues, and this very comic book, Tex's legacy has become an industry in itself. In France, Tex's name invokes an unheard of reverence applied to anyone other than the sacred Jerry Lewis. There have been a myriad of (vastly inferior, in my opinion) cartoon remakes, imitations, homages, rip-offs, and even live-action versions of Tex's unique and finely honed approach to animated mayhem. In a way, we've all been influenced by Tex's vision; Baby-Boomer and Baby-Buster alike, we're all part of *Generation Tex*.

And the funniest thing of all? I don't think *anyone* could be more astounded by all of this . . . than Tex Avery himself. ♥